Bishop Shanahan and his Missionary Family

MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE HOLY ROSARY
KILLESHANDRA, CO. CAVAL.
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Foreword

The spiritual letter as a literary form has a long and revered history in the Church. St. Paul’s teaching has come down to us through his letters to communities or local churches; later St. Jerome wrote spiritual letters to individual persons whose lives he guided. Nearer our own time Father Francis Libermann left to his missionary sons a striking portrait of himself in his letters to missionar-y in Africa and to his dirigés, and of course the letters of Dom Chapman are well known and treasured.

Some of these letters were intimate and were addressed to individuals and their personal problems. Others were treatises rather than letters in the accepted sense of the term. Some were strictly spiritual, others did not shy away from material concerns. Some revealed little about the author’s character and temperament. In others it was the writer’s personality coming through the pages which gave them almost all their value.

Bishop Shanahan’s letters fall into this category. He did not pass on a well ordered body of teaching to his religious family. His legacy is far more precious. He does not hide behind his teaching. In the intimacy and warmth of person to person dialogue the affectionate Father and saintly Founder reveals himself. Moving easily from the humdrum to the spiritual, he sees the spiritual everywhere. He can descend to the trivial and somehow bring home to us the truth that nothing really is trivial, that God is in the little things as well as the big. Man of faith that he is, he sees all the circumstances of life as fresh manifestations of God and His love for all of us. Bishop Shanahan’s writings well up from the pure source of an abiding consciousness of God and a loving intimacy with him. They are never speculative dissertations on man’s relationship with a transcendent God, they are vivid revelations of the man and the Father he loves.

The present collection of their Father’s letters will help his spiritual daughters of today to know this remarkable man better, will encourage them to cultivate his spirit and continue his work in the world. Through them a Father speaks to his children personally and unfolds to them his grand design for their lives. The letters are not mere historical documents any more than is the Gospel only an historical document. They do not belong to one generation of Holy Rosary Sisters just as the Gospel does not belong to one age
and one group of Christ’s followers. Their message is perennial and is as relevant to the missionary situation of the seventies and eighties as it was to that of the twenties. Through all its changing moods the missionary apostolate is always a work of faith, always God’s work. Bishop Shanahan was a highly gifted man but he was the Missionary of the century because he was essentially a man of faith, a man of God. The Holy Rosary Sister who is imbued with her Founder’s spirit of faith and love cannot fail in her vocation in this or any age however missionary techniques or approaches may change. She will discover the man and his spirit in his letters.

Sister Brigid Ryan deserves the greatest gratitude from her sisters for making available to them these precious self-revelations of their Father in God. She approaches her task with great sensitivity, even with reverence. Guided by the old maxim that no one can edit an overflowing heart she wisely lets the man speak for himself.

May the Holy Spirit open the minds and hearts of his daughters to listen to his voice.


Holy Ghost Missionary College, Kimmage.
Introduction

This second volume of Bishop Shanahan and his Missionary Family is in response to repeated requests on the part of the sisters of the Congregation.

In these letters, the founder of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary, with wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit, communicates his own vision, his genius, his deep faith in the fatherhood and providence of God, his personal concern and human sensitivity to individual needs and his transparency to the action of the Holy Spirit.

All that God had given him he shares and communicates to us in these letters. A voice from the past—they come to give direction and involvement to the youthful idealism of today. They communicate a spirit of hope and joy in “the living love of God”; the ability to take prudent risks with the prudence of the Holy Spirit—the prudence of those who pray, of those who seek nothing but the glory of God and that others may come to know him as a Father and to realise the deep reality of the divine life in which we are enfolded.

His was true apostolic leadership—a true response to the gospel of God’s love—his belief in the worthwhileness of the apostolate and its final success. It is for us Holy Rosary Sisters to “distil” the grace and spirit of our founder Bishop Joseph Shanahan.

I would ask you to continue to spend yourself heart and soul in the great work given you by God. . . . No power on earth can hinder you.

Sister M. Brigid Ryan
See I Am Doing a New Thing

(1923-1933)

When, in the autumn of 1923 Bishop Shanahan left Rome with the papal fiat of the Pope of the Missions that he should set about forming a new Missionary Society of Sisters without delay because "This thing is surely from God", and, in the power of his faith to work wonders with the assurance of Pope Pius XI that "You have my blessing, it will supply all your needs"—he tells us he left the Vatican feeling the richest man in the world.

First among these blessings was the gracious and generous offering of the Dominican nuns of Cabra to give Sisters for the privileged work of the formation of the first members of his new Missionary Sisterhood. With complete trust and confidence Bishop Shanahan confided this making of missionaries in co-operation with the Holy Spirit into the hands of the Dominican Sisters in the persons of Mother Xavier O'Connor and Mother Aquinas McSwiggan—with such creative success that soon he could write:

All the days of my life I shall thank God
for having sent the Dominican Sisters
to take charge of his little society of
The Holy Rosary.

How good God is to have left you to perfect
the work begun at Killeshandra.

High as my expectations were where Killeshandra
is concerned, you have soared far beyond them.

God is with you
and
has visibly
blessed you.
It is in His name as Ordinary of this Vicariate that I write these lines... I thank you for your part in bringing Nigeria to the feet of Christ. A great Church will arise amidst the people we serve.

These letters of the early years manifest not only the confidence and concern, the friendship and love of our Founder for our Dominican Mothers, but also the business-like basis on which the foundation was laid.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
28th March 1923.

Dear Mr. Ryan,

I wish you, and Mrs. Ryan, your son and daughters a very holy, happy Easter, with a continuation of God’s evident blessings on each and every one of you. It could not be otherwise in a home where God and His Blessed Mother hold a place of honour.

It did me good to spend a week in an Irish Catholic home. God bless you in return for your generous, kindly, homely hospitality.

As a special favour I would ask to have a mention made of Nigeria at the Rosary every night. In a few months I hope to be once more at my post. At night when reciting my Rosary along the little bush paths that ramble in and out of our African villages, I will think of you and those in your happy home.

Whether in Nigeria or Abbeyleix, we are speaking to Our Own Father who delights to see that we love Him, and love each other in keeping with His own command.

My kindest regards to Mrs. Ryan, to Bessie, Annie, May and Joe. God bless you and them.

I remain, dear Mr. Ryan, Sincerely yours in Christ,


18th September 1923.

My dear Bessie,

Canon Law exacts from those who intend entering Religious Life an answer to the queries enclosed. Will you be so good as to fill it
in, sign it and get it signed by the parish priest.
Will you set down on a sheet apart all your qualifications and accomplishments: teaching, music, etc. etc.; your education, etc.; the subjects you teach or have taught; certificates of any description.
Yours in a hurry. God bless you.

+J. Shanahan.

Blackrock, Dublin.
20th September 1923.

My dear Bessie,
I wish I could tell you to go on with the preparations for the great day when the Castle is to be handed over to the Nigerians! There is no news from anybody concerned. I fear I committed a serious blunder in not going on to Kilkenny to have a personal interview with Dr. Brownrigg.
If my faux pas in overlooking His Lordship is not providentially remedied by Dr. Downey I fear it is all up with the Castle as no permission will be granted to set up a Missionary Institution in it.
I have only to wait for a letter from Dr. Downey. He will tell me how matters stand. Mr. Maher did not write yet. The novena is going ahead in the meantime.
The Cabra Sisters will write to you to come on to Cabra. Will you wait over a while as your presence might be badly needed should the Castle come to us.
I was sorry to miss Nano at Maryboro’. I saw her, but being in the last carriage, she did not see me. Not knowing what the shunting operations were to be, I did not leave the carriage. Won’t you tell her how sorry I was not to have had the pleasure of bidding her goodbye—if pleasure is the right term to use when there’s no pleasure in bidding goodbye.
God bless you. I’ll let you know immediately I hear any news.
With all good wishes.

Very sincerely yours,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Remember me to May, Annie and Joe.—J. S.
Blackrock College, Dublin.
16th November 1923.

To Rev. Mother Colmcille Flynn,
Dominican Convent, Cabra, Dublin.

Dear Rev. Mother Prioress,

The Mission of Southern Nigeria has no Sisters to undertake the Christian formation of the thousands upon thousands of women and girls who are destined to take such an important part in the establishment of Christian families.

The ten Protestant sects that work alongside the Catholic missions have at their service a goodly number of lady missioners whose presence adds considerably to the many difficulties already facing the Catholic Missioners in Nigeria.

Missionary Sisters must be got, since there is no Irish congregation of Sisters in a position to undertake the missionary work among the poor African pagans. It would seem that the only hope of getting Sisters lies in the establishment of a Missionary Sisterhood.

The nucleus of a Sisterhood is in fact already in existence in the persons of a small group of girls who, on hearing of the distress of their African sisters, have volunteered for Missionary work in S. Nigeria.

Our Most Holy Father to whom I related during the course of a private audience in July of this year, the heroic offer made by these brave Apostolic-souled girls, advised me to organise them into a religious Society in Ireland, placing them meanwhile under the care of good Religious as ordinary boarders in a Convent school, thereby, enabling them to begin their preliminary training in preparation for their future religious and missionary life.

Some short time ago I asked you as a special favour to accept in your boarding school at St. Mary’s seven of the Nigerian Missionary Volunteers. You were good enough to accept them.

In the meantime, since July, active steps have been taken to secure a suitable site and home for the future Missionary Sisterhood. Quite recently a good house was discovered in Co. Cavan. It suits very well. His Lordship, Dr. Finegan, has graciously welcomed the New Sisterhood into his Diocese and has furthermore, undertaken to give it Canonical Status as a Religious and Missionary Society. There
remains the very important matter of securing the services of experienced Religious who would be willing to undertake the religious training of the New Sisterhood in their home in Co. Cavan.

It is to you I come once again, Rev. Mother Prioress, to request you to take up this most important work upon which depends the whole future of the New Society.

The Dominican Sisters have already won the full confidence, trust, esteem and affection of their seven Missionary boarders. It would seem to be almost evident that Providence wishes you to bring these young girls through the various stages of probation demanded by Our Holy Mother, the Church, on to the profession. Will you be good enough to remain with them until they are able to take care of themselves as religious?

The acceptance of this undertaking in the Sacred interests of Christ and His African Missionary Sisters and children will bring from Heaven to the Community of St. Mary’s, blessings that will compensate it for the great sacrifice entailed by the acceptance. Should you accede to my request, I will guarantee that the Community of St. Mary’s will incur no financial loss, nor will it incur any financial liability in taking charge of the religious training of the New Sisterhood. The Vicar Apostolic of S. Nigeria is responsible for all financial matters.

At the present stage I presume you will not consider it necessary for me to enter into details. Should you wish me to do so, I will be ready to discuss the subject with you under all its aspects at any time you mention.

May God bless you.

Believe me, dear Rev. Mother Prioress,
Your humble servant in Christ,

Vic. Apost. S. Nigeria.
Blackrock College, Dublin.
31st December 1923.

To the Group of seven aspirants
at Dominican Convent, Cabra.

My dear Sister Agnes,

I wish to thank you for the kindly Christmas greetings you sent me on behalf of Nigeria’s first group of Missionary Sisters. I was deeply moved by the beautiful Christmas gift you sent me: a beautiful bouquet of spiritual treasures, each one of which represents a spiritual flower grown in your own hearts, under the impulse of, and in co-operation with the Holy Ghost.

May those spiritual flowers—the only ones that never fade—continue to grow ever more beautiful, ever more numerous in the hearts of each one of you.

I wish you one and all a very holy, happy New Year. God grant that it may see you settled down in your new home in Killeshandra.

Your prayers are needed more than ever to remove the final obstacles that stand in the way of the full realisation of all your wishes.

Tomorrow, first day of the New Year, I am offering up the Holy Sacrifice for you and the new Sisterhood, and on the 6th I will say the Mass as usual for that intention. On the 2nd I will say Mass for that dear soul who gave you the offering for the Nigerian Mission.

Should any one of you wish to write to me about anything whatsoever, do so freely. While I am here in Ireland I wish to do for you anything I possibly can do. When I happen to go to Cabra, if any of you wish to see me in private for any purpose connected with your soul or your vocation, etc., let me know and I will be only too pleased to see you.

United with you in prayer for the success of a cause which is equally dear to all of us and imparting to each of you all the blessings I can bestow,

I am, dear Sister Agnes,

Very sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Jos. Shanahan.
(We were in Cabra then)

My dear Sister Agnes,

Please find herewith a cheque for £5 for stamps. Fr. Whitney told me you needed this amount to begin with. Please let me know when you need more. I send also a parcel of beads for distribution according to Fr. Whitney’s instructions. The beads are blessed and have the Apostolic Indulgences attached.

I hope you are all very well. Things are going on well where the new foundation is concerned. It is to be hoped that you will soon enter your new home in Killeshandra. Keep on praying hard.

God bless you with your missionary companions.

Sincerely yours in Xto.,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
4th February 1924.

My dear Mrs. Ryan,

Your letter comes to remind me that while I am forgetting my friends they are far from forgetting the cause they have just as much at heart as I have. It was a real pleasure to hear from you and to have news from Abbyleix.

Since I last saw you I have been busy somewhat more than usual. God has been very good to me, thanks to all your prayers, and has arranged matters so well that the new Convent will be opened during the course of this month.

The Cabra Sisters have rendered invaluable service. They are now seeing to all the requisites for the furnishing of the house. I could never—never do that! The thought of it used to simply frighten me. Providence gently arranges everything. Friends come from all directions, each one ready to do everything possible to help on the new foundation.

I am very grateful to you for getting up an entertainment at Abbyleix. Will you tell all your kind good friends that they will
be specially remembered in the prayers of the new Sisters and at the Masses said in their Missionary Convent.

I am writing to Fr. Breen. As soon as possible I will call down to spend a day with him and all of you. I am sending just a few lines to the nuns. My kindest regards to Pat, Annie, May and Joe, and to your own good self. God bless you one and all.

I am, dear Mrs. Ryan,

Yours very sincerely,


P.S.—I bless from all my heart Sister Margaret Mary and all the members of her Community. I shall remember her and them in my Masses.—J. S.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
19th March 1924.

My dear Mother Xavier,

I was over to see Rev. Mother Prioress and the Sisters. They asked me . . . well, a few questions about all in Killeshandra.

They are all well—God bless them—and think only of the exiles in Co. Cavan.

On St. Patrick's Day they had a local raffle with the result that good Mother M. Pius presented me with a cheque for £16–16–0—enclosed—made up of hundreds of little sacrifices on the part of the generous-hearted girls who gave their last penny for Nigeria in Killeshandra.

It is delightful to find such deep-rooted affection in the hearts of your Cabra children, affection for you and the cause you have espoused. They have all become little Missioners, the sacrifices they have made prove it. Poor Sr. M. Pius was happy beyond words—and so was I—and so were the Sisters when she presented me with the enclosed cheque. It will carry a blessing with it as it symbolises all that's generous in the hearts of children that are more than ever attached to you.

I enclose you a cheque for £20, made up of £10 from the Rev. Mother in charge of Dominican Hall; and of £10 from Rev. Mother Prioress of the Dominican College, Eccles Street. Next year, they
will do even better than this. I told them I was sending you their very generous contributions.

I saw Mr. Ryan—O'Hagan & Son—yesterday. He said that you had better leave the Insurance Policy as it is for the present until such time as you have seen Mr. Brown, and made other or better arrangements.

Rev. Mother Prioress said I would do well to insert four names in the Power of Attorney: (1) Rev. Mother Prioress of Cabra; (2) Rev. Mother Superior of Holy Rosary Convent; (3) Rev. Mother M. Aquinas; (4) Sister M. Ursula. These names have been sent on to the solicitor.

I am glad Fr. Whitney is of such use to you; glad too that Mr. John Leddy has been so very generous.

I will not fail to call again to spend a day with you before I sail for Nigeria.

God bless you.

I am, dear Rev. M. Xavier,
Sincerely yours in Xto,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
20th March 1924.

Dear Mother M. Xavier,

The total annual rent on the Convent is £103. 6. 4 (one hundred and three pounds, 6/4). The half-yearly gale falls due on the 1st May.

It is to be paid into the local Bank at Killeshandra, accompanied by a special form which will be forwarded to you by Mr. Ryan, Solicitor.

(2) The rates amount to £38. 6. 8 p.a.; the half-yearly rates are due now. They must be asked for, apparently.

(3) The Income Tax is based on the

(a) ownership of the whole property, and
(b) on the occupation of the land.

It seems the Loughs didn’t pay any because they always showed a deficit! It seems that books are to be kept showing Receipts and Expenditure, but you know all about this. I know nothing whatsoever about the whole concern.
(4) Valuation: This is not clearly known yet. It would be about £25 or £30.
(5) The insurance etc. is about £12.
(6) Elliott costs 52/- a week or £91 p.a.
(7) Cox costs in cash 25/- a week or £65 p.a.
So that under the above headings alone you will have to pay out:

**EXPENSES**

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<th>£</th>
<th>s.</th>
<th>d.</th>
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<td>Rents, Rates, etc. on “A”</td>
<td>103.6.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest on Loan “B”</td>
<td>38.6.8</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.0.0</td>
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<td>12.0.0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>91.0.0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>65.0.0</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>534.13.0</td>
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(3) Purchase of Stock and
- Agricultural implements  
(4) Maintenance of Community  
(5) Casual labour  
(6) Upkeep of Community  
(7) Reduction of loan p.a. 300.0.0

**RECEIPTS**

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| (1) From setting of land  
| (2) Collections  
| (3) Postulants |

This does not look encouraging, especially as we have to pay off at least £300 p.a., in reduction of the amount borrowed.

Will you be so good as to make out approximately the Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, so that we will have a working idea of the whole property and Community as regards Receipts and Expenses.

With all good wishes and every blessing.

I am, dear Rev. Mother,

*Sincerely yours in Xto.,
+Jos. Shanahan, C.S.Sp.*
Blackrock College, Dublin.
28th March 1924.

My dear Rev. Mother,

Herewith a letter from an excellent Catholic, Mr. O’Callaghan, General Manager of Messrs. Thompsons, forwarding a cheque for £10 for the Convent.

I wrote to acknowledge receipt of cheque, and to say that you would pray for him and the Directors, at Killeshandra. A line from you to him would mean much.

This is written in a hurry. I’m getting everything fixed up for my departure on the 23rd April, from Liverpool.

I’ll write soon again when all is ready, and I’ll be ready to spend a day with you in Killeshandra.

Kindest regards to Mother Aquinas and Sister Ursula, not forgetting the Aspirants.

God bless you.

Very sincerely in Xto.,


P.S.—You will be sorry to hear that one of the Misses Lough died rather suddenly. J.S.

There could be said also a special Mass each month or each week, in Nigeria, for all benefactors, living and dead; etc., etc.

I’m very busy getting all things squared up before I leave—I’m sailing on the 23rd April, on the EKARI.

I was very sorry to hear that poor Josie was not improving. May God’s Holy Will be done. You and all at home and poor Josie have all my sympathy, with my earnest prayers.

God bless you one and all.

Yours sincerely,

+Jos. Shanahan.
Letter kindly lent from the Archives of Dominican Convent, Cabra by Mother Colmcille Flynn, Mother Prioress General.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
6th April 1924.

Dear Reverend Mother Prioress,

On the eve of my departure from Ireland for my adopted home in Africa, I wish to thank you with your Council and the community of St. Mary’s, Cabra, for the great part you have taken in the founding of the new Missionary Convent at Killeshandra.

Had you not taken the new Society to your heart it would not have seen the day. The Holy Rosary Convent is really your spiritual daughter, all the dearer to you because of the sacrifice her existence means for you, but also because of the great things God has in store for her. The honour of the daughter redounds on the mother, and repays her for all her sacrifices.

Thanks to you, Nigeria will at long last, have its own Sisters to lead its young womanhood by word and example along the paths of virtue that lead to heaven. The poor, the weak, the afflicted, the old and abandoned ones, all those that suffer from every form of bodily and spiritual disease, will have in the Sisters the pity, the mercy, the charity of Christ Himself.

May the Queen of Apostles bless you and the new Sisterhood. She spent five years of her young life in Africa with Jesus and Joseph. May she look down kindly on you who are about to send back to Africa Mary, with her beloved Jesus and Joseph, in the person of the Sisters.

On behalf of Nigeria and Africa, and in union with all our poor African Christians, with all those that suffer in Africa in union with Jesus Christ, I bestow on you the Missioner’s blessing. God bless you all in St. Mary’s with all those who are in the Holy Rosary Convent at Killeshandra, not forgetting our many friends and benefactors.

I am, dear Reverend Mother Prioress,

Very sincerely and gratefully yours in Christ,

JOSEPH SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.
Onitsha, S. Nigeria.
8th September 1924.

My dear Sister Agnes,

With you and all in Killeshandra I rejoiced when I heard that you were to be clothed in the holy religious habit on the 15th August. And with you all, I felt with you and for you keenly disappointed when later on it was known that owing to Canon Law regulations having to be complied with, the beautiful ceremony of the clothing of Christ’s new spouses had to be postponed.

Rev. Mother told me you met with this little trial—not little though for your hearts, with the brave courage that befits missionaries. God will arrange all in His own wise, good way. It is a consolation to know you have so many friends, all of whom are keenly anxious to help in every way.

I am always delighted to get a bit of news from you or to hear about you. There is one phrase that resumes all I hear about you, and it is that all of you are making splendid efforts to be what Christ wishes you to be: models of His own self.

When I have heard that, I have heard all an old campaigner wishes to hear about the new recruits that are coming on, to take over their portion of the battle line, and fight alongside of him under the same commander-in-chief, Jesus Christ.

We are all waiting for you, and long for the day when we’ll have the happiness to see you set foot on Nigerian soil. The homes you will live in are being got ready. The women and girls, especially up the country, are anxiously looking forward to the great day of your arrival in their little villages. There will be a warm welcome for you.

I was glad to hear of the arrival at Killeshandra of Sister Isabel Fox, and of Sister Delia Kearney. God grant them the great grace of perseverance. The religious vocation is worth every conceivable sacrifice a human being can make in order to become and to remain a religious.

Whatever happiness there is to be had in this world—and there is much to be had when one is what God wishes him to be—the religious has by long odds the greatest happiness it is possible to have.

But you don’t want sermons. Pardon me for bothering you with a repetition of what you know well and hear frequently.
I had promised to give you news of the Mission. Well, I haven’t seen any of it since I came back. Nearly all my time has been spent at this old desk of mine, getting things squared up. At long last I’ll be free tomorrow for my first journey to distant Ogoja. No more palavers nor office work for three weeks at least. I’ll be alone with all God’s beautiful creation and I’ll have the time of my life. This is a treat in store for you when you come to Nigeria.

God bless you, Sister Agnes. God bless all your Sisters. No day passes that I have not a special memento for you in my Mass.

With all affectionate regards,

Very sincerely yours in Xto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Onitsha, S. Nigeria.
Christmas 1924.

To The Novices and Postulants
at Holy Rosary Convent.

My very dear Sisters,

I thank you for your very kind Christmas greetings. I heard with great joy of the great doings on Rosary Sunday, when the first seven novices received the beautiful white religious habit of the Missionary Society of Our Lady of the Rosary.

In addition to this piece of good news, I heard that the remaining “All Blacks” will be transformed into children of the Holy Rosary Society in the very near future.

I heard about your success as “rain-makers”—but I didn’t hear much about you as “hay-makers”! Now I see you put it all down to Co. Cavan and the lakes! Well, Well, Well!

Out here in Nigeria a good rain-maker makes a fortune in no time. But this year they all went bang. Not a drop of rain could they bring down. No wonder, since it all went off on a holiday to Ireland.

The sun came back to us a couple of months ago, and indeed it looked as if it were suffering from chills and cold feet. It is all right again, now that ’tis back in its own country. Our weather is simply glorious ... gl-or-i-ous.

God bless you. I will say one of the three Masses for your inten-
tions on Christmas night.

With all affectionate good wishes for a very happy Christmas,

Yours very sincerely in Xto.,

†Jos. Shanahan.

Catholic Mission, Onitsha,
S. Nigeria, West Africa.
3rd May 1925.

Sister M. Ignatius,
Ursuline Convent, Sligo.

My dear Sister M. Ignatius,

I am deeply grateful to you and to the pupils of St. Vincent’s School, for the beautiful letter you wrote me in your own name and on their behalf. In it you mentioned that you, i.e., the staff and school, had adopted S. Nigeria as your own. As a token of the apostolic spirit of sacrifice which should be one of the many virtues every missioner should aim at possessing, you send me £2. I know every penny of the two pounds meant a sacrifice—and no small one in many cases—for some of my fervent little missionary helpers in far away Sligo.

Nothing makes a human being more Christ-like than giving to others of the best we have. The best we have—as well as all the rest we have—comes from God, and is no other than God’s own Holy Spirit given to us on the day of our baptism. With the gift of his own self, God bestows on us that most glorious and inexpressible of gifts, namely that of co-operating with Him in preparing other human souls for the reception of God’s own self in baptism and the other sacraments; in preparing other human beings for the ineffable dignity and glory of becoming deified gods.

Now, this process of divinisation passes unobserved in a Catholic land like dear holy Ireland, where the devil owns very little beyond a perch or two with an odd landlord here and there. But out here in Africa the devil has set up his throne in broad daylight, and is worshipped by millions of poor benighted human beings. It is the saddest sight in this vale of tears to see men on their knees in fear and trembling before some hideous, filthy idol, adoring the invisible
but present spirit of evil.

You cannot conceive, no matter how vivid your imagination may be, the depths of degradation to which the devil has reduced his unfortunate worshippers. St. Paul gives only a faint idea of it in his epistles.

It is given to the missioner in pagan lands to behold the full and complete vision, to grasp the full meaning of what is meant by “the world, the flesh and the devil”. For the first time in his life he realises all he owes to God by being born of Christian parents in a Catholic home in a Catholic country. He realises, in the second place, for the first time, too, perhaps, the tremendous import of his apostolic mission: “Go, teach ... behold I am with you ...”.

In Christ, with Christ, through the power of Christ, the missioner has power to overthrow the devil, to oust him out of his usurped kingdom, to knock down his throne and put him to flight, while at the same time, taking his poor unfortunate slaves by the hand and bringing them to Christ, to freedom and heaven.

I have seen all this with my own eyes and lived on the borderline between hell and heaven; between virtue and vice; between life and death for close on a quarter of a century.

I have had the unspeakable joy of seeing wrought under my own eyes those miracles of conversion which Christ wrought long ago in Judea, and continues to work today as He did then, among the poor children of men that He loves, and loves so passionately as to give His life for them.

The happiness the apostles had in being with Him on His journeys, that same happiness the missionary priests, brothers and sisters have today. To be a missioner in pagan lands is to be in possession of the crowning grace of Christ’s personal love and friendship. The hundredfold promised to those who leave the poor little “all” of this world to follow Him—God’s own self—is given a hundred times over to the missioner.

Every newly-converted soul, every newly-baptised Christian, is for the missioner a source of an ever renewed, ever increased happiness: the happiness of seeing the Divine Master’s Kingdom established in every soul, of seeing Him, and heaven with Him, there—where yesterday there was the spirit of evil and death.

We lead a wanderer’s life going from village to village, from tribe to tribe, ever with Christ, letting Him have the full use of our feet
and hands, and lips and heart, and soul, to do with them as He
wishes; to make Himself known to our fellow men in the depths of
the African forest.

We love the loneliness of the forest, of the vast undulating African
plains. He is with us all the time, and around and about us are all
the glories of His creation; the glories of tropical Africa. Every
flower and shrub and tree reveals to us some little thing of His
beauty. All belongs to Him, speaks of Him, shows forth His glory.

I enclose a copy of the sacred returns for the year 1924. They will
tell you what Christ is doing today in this small portion of His vast
vineyard.

I have told you what are the thoughts and feelings and personal
experience of one of the workers in that vineyard with Christ. Now
you tell me that you wish to come along and take a part in the
work with Him. You are welcome a hundred times over. Be Christ’s
missioners every moment of your life from today to your death.
Make every soul that comes near you become a Missioner of Christ.
Live as Missioners of Christ should live. Let your life be a revelation
of Him to all those who may happen to come in contact with you.
Like the rose and the lily make their author known by being perfect
roses and lilies so let us, “deified gods”, make God known by being
Christ-like during our short span of existence in this world.

Should He call you to the glories of the apostolate in pagan lands,
follow Him, and you will enjoy heaven on earth as much as it is
given to a soul to have here below a foretaste of heaven with Christ
on earth.

Does this mean that Missioners are all ready-made saints? Without troubles, or temptations, or humiliations? If Christ suffered,
and His apostles and His saints, so will His Missioners have to
suffer and put up with crosses of every description. The Missioners’
life is hard but glorious in spite of every hardship and trial. There
is not one among us who would not die a hundred times over rather
than ever abandon the post assigned to him by God in the heart of
Africa.

As death gradually approaches, the Missioner feels welling up
in his heart a new confidence in Him who is about to become his
judge. Although he may have little else to his credit, the Missioner
can at least say in all sincerity: “O Jesus Christ, my God, during
my short and useless life, I tried to do some little thing for You, as
a token of love and gratitude for all You have done for me. I made some effort to make other men, my poor fellow sinners, know You, love You, and serve You."

I had no intention when starting this letter to go beyond the fourth page. Now that it is written, in no small hurry to my little fellow Missioners in St. Vincent’s School, I will send it along as it is. It will make known to you at any rate, what are the thoughts that are uppermost in the mind of an old African Missioner. I will be amply repaid for the rambling pages I have written if a single one among you makes a more fervent act of love of God, and expresses the wish that all men may know Him, love Him, and serve Him: the best, and most faithful and loving of friends.

Wishing you, dear Sister M. Ignatius, and all your pupils every blessing. Wishing every blessing for Rev. Mother and all the Sisters in the community.

I remain,

Sincerely yours in Xto.,


Catholic Mission, Onitsha, S. Nigeria.
4th November 1925.

My dear Mother Xavier,

You will be pleased to hear that I have received a letter from the Convent solicitor embodying your wishes for the transfer of the property to a Board of Trustees. Today I have written to him to carry out the transfer on the lines suggested. He will tell Rev. Mother Priorress and your own good self all about it.

I have written to His Lordship, Dr. Finegan, about the matter, and sent him a copy of my letter to the solicitor.

It is only a matter of a month or two, and all will be safe, please God.

I have to thank you for the long letters you send to me so regularly, giving all the news about Killeshandra.

From all directions letters come to me bringing unsolicited expressions of . . .

(Only the first page of this letter—as above—is available.)
My dear Sister M. John,

I received with great pleasure your letter announcing the news of your reception of the religious and missionary habit of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. Our Lord intends to use your heart and soul in union with His own, to pour into the hearts of those that hunger and thirst, the untold treasures of Divine Life.

Today you experience all the new-found happiness of the spouse of Christ, but a greater happiness is in store for you: the happiness of sharing with Christ in the giving of eternal life to thousands of poor Africans. There is far greater happiness in giving than receiving. It is this happiness Christ has reserved for His Missioners. He has chosen you to be one of them. Continue to pray for me since I have had the good fortune to be one of those for whom you are to pray specially. I will pray for you. God bless you.

Very sincerely yours,

+J. SHANAHAN.

St. Mary’s College, Rathmines, Dublin.

11th June 1926.

My dear Mother Xavier,

I received your telegram of welcome on board the Irish boat as it was leaving Liverpool for the Old Land on Monday last.

If I listened to my own wishes I would have gone down to Killeshandra the day following my arrival here. But I can’t get away until I have met the Rev. Fr. Provincial and Fr. Leen. Both are absent but are expected back any day. At all events, I hope to be with you—for a very short time only—on Monday or Tuesday. I have been to Cabra, where I had the pleasure of meeting Rev. Mother Priorress and the Community. She told me of the success of your great Corpus Christi procession.

I had a long talk with Rt. Rev. Mgr. McCaffrey. I have now to spend a day with Dr. Finegan. Then—and then only—can I go and spend a few hours with you and all in Killeshandra. I’m keeping it on purpose for the end of my visit. You know, of course, that
I am to be in Paris at the earliest possible date. On my return from Paris, I will, please God, be free to spend as many days as I wish with you.

Father Whitney is sailing to Nigeria on the boat that brought me home. He is driving me in one of Mr. Dawson’s cars to Co. Cavan and to Killeshandra.

I am sending this note by Father Whyte. You have made a new man of him.

God bless you and all in the Holy Rosary Convent.

Very sincerely yours in Xto.,

+Joseph Shanahan, C.S.Sp.

St. Mary’s College.
21st June 1926.

My dear Mother Xavier,

The few hours I spent with you and the Sisters in Killeshandra are among the happiest of my life. I thank God for granting me the favour of experiencing happiness such as this. All the days of my life I shall thank Him for having sent the Dominican Sisters to take charge of His little Society of the Holy Rosary.

High as my expectations were where Killeshandra is concerned, you have soared far beyond them. God is with you and has visibly blessed you. His Divine Presence is felt in His home on the hill.

I long to be back again with you when things are settled and I am free to spend a few weeks in your holy solitude and rest my soul as well as my limbs.

Father Whitney is to leave Ireland tomorrow. It will be a day of real sorrow for him. God permits it should be so for the sanctification of this holy, zealous Missioner. There is no surer sign of God’s loving care for a soul than the sign of the cross. “In hoc Signo vinces”: the cross is the pledge of victory.

Won’t you pray for poor Father Pat. I have done all I could since my return to show him in the name of Christ and on His behalf all my gratitude for what he has done for the Sisters in Killeshandra.

God bless you, my dear Rev. Mother Xavier.

Yours very sincerely,

P.S.—Father Mulvany died a very happy death. Father Ronayne was with him. The cause of his death was inflammation of the kidneys. R.I.P.

J. S.

St. Mary’s College, Rathmines, Dublin.
21st June 1926.

My dear Mother Xavier,

I have the pleasure to enclose you cheque No. B56795 on the Munster & Leinster Bank for £145. This cheque was given to me by Rev. Mother Margaret Mary, Superior of the Presentation Convent, Maynooth, with the request that I forward it to you and tell you that she is happy to send it to Killeshandra as a token of her affection for the new Missionary Society. This amount forms part of the Presentation Convent burse.

With all good wishes,

I am, dear Rev. Mother,
Very sincerely yours,


In a P.S. to a letter of June 1926, Bishop Shanahan adds:

“Father Mulvany died a very happy death in the hospital at Onitsha. Father Ronayne was with him. R.I.P.

The priestly purity of his soul transfused his whole life, and it was the secret of the attraction which he exercised on all who knew his humble character and his large heart—a heart full of love for God and for men, and of pity and compassion for poor sinners. It was in the designs of God that Father Mulvany should not wait long for his eternal reward. His last wish was that his resting place should be among his black children. He died the death of the predestined, and set for all of us his companions, the example of what the ideal missionary should be. God grant that his grave may attract many other priests to follow his example.”

Father Mulvany, nephew of the then Bishop of Meath, was one of the first of the secular priests to volunteer for Nigeria; and the
first Maynooth priest to lay down his life in Nigeria.

Bishop Shanahan tells us that when one of the early Missionaries in Nigeria died, his confrères prayed: “Accept O Eternal Father, the sacrifice of the life of this, our brother in Christ; the sacrifice of our lives too. But grant that over his bones and ours, a great Church will arise amidst the people whom we serve.”

St. Mary’s College, Rathmines.
23rd August 1926.

My dear Mother M. Xavier,

It was with regret that I beheld my Second Novitiate of one week draw to an end at Killeshandra on Sunday last. It is hard to spend a day there without coming under the divine influence of the Spirit of the Novitiate; His Presence is most certainly felt in the Holy Rosary Convent.

There is no use in trying to tell you how happy I am and how full of gratitude my heart is; gratitude to God, and to the Dominican Sisters, and to the novices and to all our generous friends and benefactors. I’ll tell Our Holy Father all about it, if I can, and ask him for all his blessings, for one and all.

On Thursday evening we leave Ireland on our way to Rome.
I’ll send a card now and then to let you know where we are. In case you may wish to write, please address your letter to me at:

Séminaire Français,
42, Via Sta Chiara (XVII).
Roma,
Italy.

Needless to tell you I will ask our Most Holy Father for a very special blessing for you, with Mother Aquinas, and the Novices and Aspirants.

I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,

JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.
My dear Mother Xavier,

I am just back from the private audience with our Holy Father. I never felt happier in my life.

He made many enquiries about the great work in the Holy Rosary Convent, Killeshandra. Again and again he told me how happy he was to hear of all the Dominican Sisters have done for the new Congregation. He was equally happy to hear of the exceptional spirit of piety and missionary zeal that animates novices and aspirants. He blessed you all on several occasions.

It is almost certain that I am to go back to Nigeria. I told him it was the desire of my life to be an African Missionary on active service in Africa all the days of my life. He told me he would let me know officially in a few days. In the meantime, his own personal view would be that I return to Africa even though my eyes are of little use. A co-adjutor of my own choice would do all the work, but under my direction, etc. etc.

So from this I know that I will go back again. The Congregation of the Propaganda expressed the same desire—and they have the principal say in the matter because they have to advise the Holy Father on the matter. Your prayers have been heard. When Rome speaks, there is no longer any room for doubt or hesitation. I said Mass for you on the tomb of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul.

When I get back I will give you all the rest of the news. God bless you with the Mistress of Novices, the Novices and the Aspirants.

With all affectionate good wishes,

Yours very sincerely in Christ,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S. Sp.

30 Rue L’homond, Paris (5e).
28th September 1926.

My dear Mother Xavier,

I received your kind letter of the 10th September. I’m so glad you had a few days’ rest in Cabra. It is a real pleasure to hear that you got Rev. Father M. Eaton and Father Fahy to visit Killeshandra.
They were ever among our most sincere and devoted friends. They must have been charmed with all they saw during the few hours they spent with you.

I have just written to Mother Aquinas, telling her the album was presented to our Most Holy Father. It would have been very hard for her and for all of us if after all the trouble she took, the album had not been presented. It took a load off my heart today when Bishop Pichot told me how it reached the hands of His Holiness.

As soon as I can possibly manage I will get back to Ireland and go down to Killeshandra to have a few weeks rest. Travelling is no rest for either body or soul. Before restarting for Africa, I want to be alone with the fields and the trees and the lakes and the birds and the animals—and above all, alone with those I love so dearly. You won’t be able to read this writing, it is so bad.

My sight has improved. My general health is better than it has been for years. All I need is a few days out of contact with the world. I am heartily sick of it. That in itself is better than a retreat. I am returning to Africa happier than ever I have been in my life. I attribute all this to your fervent prayers, to the prayers of God’s children in the Holy Rosary Convent.

I send you and all in Killeshandra Convent my blessing.

I remain, my dear Rev. Mother,

Yours very sincerely in J.C.,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
19th October 1926.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Monsignor MacCaffrey intends to pay a visit to your home in Killeshandra during the course of the coming week. He is most interested in the great work, and anxious to revisit it and see with his own eyes the progress achieved since the day of the first reception.

I will write again to let you know the exact day we hope to leave
Maynooth with the hope of reaching Killeshandra early.
I hope you and all in the Convent are very well. God bless you.
With all affectionate regards,
Yours very sincerely,
+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

(Monsignor MacCaffrey was then the President of Maynooth College, and a very kind friend of Bishop Shanahan’s.)

Blackrock College, Dublin.
23rd November 1926.

My dear Rev. Mother Xavier,
Thanks for your letter with the pound note enclosed. Had I my own way, I would have been with you long ago. Any day I spend in Killeshandra I enjoy unmixed happiness. The little oratory where every soul is wrapped in God appeals to me as nothing on earth. It is easy to say one’s prayers there and there are no distractions possible during the offering of the Holy Sacrifice. I will be with you before the 8th December to bless the Rosary beads.

The concert in Blackrock was a great success. Killeshandra got the hall filled as never it had been. There were close on 2,000 people present. There was no standing room left, and no room for many who had to go away. The propaganda part of the concert has been certainly wonderful. I don’t know about the financial side of it.

There is no praise too high for Miss Higgins the organiser, and for the Dublin artistes. Father Burke had the stage beautifully arranged, including specially prepared private rooms for the artistes. The ladies, of course, had one all to themselves, and they did enjoy it.

After the concert, they were entertained to supper. They expressed their great pleasure in having been able to do something for the young Missionary Society at Killeshandra. That cold I had is gone, never to return, I hope. It wasn’t serious, only just a bit of a nuisance.

Be so good as to tell Mother Aquinas and the Sisters that I am
grateful for their kind good wishes, and send them my affectionate regards in return.

I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Very sincerely yours in Xto.,

+JOSEPH SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
29th November 1926.

My dear Mother M. Xavier,

Father Leen told me he would bless the Rosary beads and give them the apostolic blessing as well. I would have gone, of course, if he did not manage to get away from Blackrock and do the needful for you. I am thankful, for just now I’ve got to be here in Dublin to meet one of our possible missionary priests who may come any day to see me. Then I have got to go at once down to Kerry to see the Bishop. After that I’ve to go to Rockwell for the 8th December. They have invited me for Pontifical High Mass on that day.

I hope to call and see your friends in Cashel. I was ever so glad to hear that one of your nephews is to become a priest. It was one of your sister’s most cherished and holy desires. God has granted her this most exceptional grace. I went to see your brother Tom, and spent with him and his family a few very happy hours. Needless to say, I’ll call again. It was delightful to listen to his reminiscences of long ago down in dear old Tipp. You continue to occupy in his heart the same place you occupied then. You are woven into all the dear affectionate memories of those cherished days of innocent childhood.

I had the happiness of calling on Mother Aquinas’ friends. It has brought new sources of gratitude to God into my life, to meet souls like those of your friends and hers. How good God has been to you, and to all those you love.

As soon as ever I am free I’ll run up to Killeshandra.

God bless and keep you and the Holy Rosary Convent under His very special protection. With all kind good wishes,

Yours very sincerely in Xto.,

+JOSEPH SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.
Blackrock College, Dublin.
1st December 1926.

My dear Mother M. Xavier,

On the occasion of the anniversary festival of your great patron, St. Francis Xavier, I wish you in the midst of all your labours for Jesus Christ, and the souls He has entrusted to your care, an abundance of that heavenly peace and joy that filled the heart and soul of Xavier while he, like you, laboured and suffered for Christ and for souls.

May you live to see many more anniversaries of St. Francis Xavier, each anniversary bringing you nearer to heaven and making you more and more like unto our Divine model, Jesus Christ, making you ever dearer and dearer to His Divine Heart.

May you have the happiness of seeing your religious daughters realise all the heavenly dreams you have dreamt for them; dreams that are in reality the expression of God’s will where they are concerned. May they be the great missionary saints you wish them to be. May they enter heaven preceded by multitudes of souls their prayers and sufferings will have sent there. May all your wishes, dear Mother, be realised—and they will be—for you have no other wish than that the holy will of God be fulfilled in you, and in your religious daughters, and in all souls on earth.

I will offer up the holy Sacrifice for your intentions on the morning of the 3rd. Had I my wish, I would be with you in Killeshandra.

God bless you.

I remain, with deep affection and gratitude,

my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely in Jesus Christ,

+Joseph Shanahan, C.S.Sp.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
6th December 1926.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Please find herewith cheques and notes value £84, the proceeds of the recent concert in Blackrock College. This amount was handed to me last night for you, by Miss Higgins and Mrs. Sandes with a
few other friends of Killeshandra and Nigeria.

It is a great pleasure for me to forward you this amount on behalf of your Dublin friends.

I hope you and Mother Aquinas and the novices are alright. I was back in good time to give two conferences in Blackrock: one to the college boys, and one to the scholastics. I'm off to Rockwell in a few minutes.

God bless you. With affectionate regards,

Very sincerely yours in Xto.,

+Jos. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Larine, Maynooth.
18th December 1926.

My dear Mother Xavier,

A hurried line to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 13th inst.

I am so pleased to hear the good news about the novices having passed successfully their examination for their profession. The 2nd of February is in every way most suitable for the First Profession of the Holy Rosary Sisters. Since it is the wish of His Lordship that I be there for the Profession, needless to say I will be with you.

The Bishop of Kerry has kindly consented to let one of his newly ordained priests go to Nigeria after the ordinations in June 1927. He may even allow two to go. The prayers of the novices are being heard.

I was in Killarney for two days but had to come back to Dublin to meet the Bishop. But the visit to Killarney was most useful to me and the Mission.

In Rockwell all are well, and everything is in full swing. I spent a most delightful week there. There were receptions of scholastics and Children of Mary. Later on, concerts were held for the Missions.

I called to see your friends in Cashel and saw the future Vincentian. He is cut out for the priesthood. His father and mother are overjoyed. It does one good to meet people who are happy with that happiness that heaven alone can give. I called also with Dr. Crehan to see your other sister in the old home outside Cashel. I gave no warning. I couldn’t give any, as I had so many appointments to keep, but promised to call again later on before I sail for Africa.
Last night I met the young students here in Maynooth who are ready to go to Nigeria. It is for that I came down here. They are as happy and anxious to be off to Nigeria as are the novices in the Holy Rosary Convent. Won’t you keep on praying that all may be allowed to go to Nigeria.

With all affectionate good wishes,
I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
22nd December 1926.

My dear Mother M. Xavier,

I thank you and the Sisters for your kind Christmas greetings and for all the prayers you and they continually offer for my intentions and the Mission of S. Nigeria. On Christmas Night I will offer up one of my Masses for your intention and theirs.

I congratulate you with the Mistress of Novices, and the Novices and Postulants on the success of the examination they had to pass in presence of His Lordship. I am happy with you to know that His Lordship’s verdict is that the religious training of the Novices is simply excellent.

And now there remains but the day of the Profession to be fixed. You suggest the Feast of St. Matthias, Apostle. Dr. Leen says that day will suit him and enable him to conduct the Novices’ final Retreat. Since His Lordship has been so good as to honour and give me special pleasure by inviting me to receive in his name the Novices’ profession, needless to say I will have great pleasure indeed in being with you for that purpose on the day mentioned.

His Lordship has not written, but I presume it was his intention that you should write in his name.

Regarding the Masses, I would ask you to take no step in the matter until I have approached the Bishop, who is the only person competent to give orders as to what is to be done with the Mass Intentions received by the Convent. If he agrees that some Mass Intentions are to be sent to Nigeria, then it is within my province to direct that all Masses sent to S. Nigeria are to be sent to the Bishop for distribution.
The Pro-Vicar has written that he has no Mass Intentions for the Fathers of the Vicariate. This means that I will have to make an appeal directly for the purpose of securing Intentions for the Mission.

In case the Convent sends Intentions to the Mission I agree that the Convent retain for itself whatever amount may be over and above the normal 5/- stipend. In case 2/6 Intentions are received by the Convent, it will not be necessary to add to that amount; let the 2/6 Intentions be sent along as they come. This arrangement would solve the difficulty you mentioned in connection with Mass Intentions that are intended to help the Convent.

I hope to get this matter settled by the Bishop, and put in writing so as to avoid difficulties now and in the future.

You will be sorry to hear that Sister Magdalen* has had to spend 3½ weeks in hospital in Calabar. She is very weak and worn through excessive work. Won't you get prayers said that she may get back her strength to keep on the heroic work she is doing single-handed, all alone in distant Nigeria, until help comes from Killeshandra. If anything were to compel her to leave Calabar just now, there would be great danger of the complete ruin of the Convent School and all it stands for.

But Our Lord will not permit that ruin overtake His children in Calabar. Let us beseech Him to come to their assistance by keeping Sister Magdalen Walker at her lonely post in spite of illness, fatigue, and over-work. Let this be His Christmas gift to Nigeria.

God bless you and the Sisters. To you and to them I send my most affectionate greetings, with my blessing.

I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,


P.S.—I called to see your friends in Cashel. Dr. Crehan came with me. Needless to say we met with a warm reception. Unfortunately, my time was so limited, I could only spend a few minutes with them. I saw your nephew, the future Vincentian. He is evidently cut out for the Priesthood. He will, please God, enter next September. What a blessing it is for him and what a consolation and an honour it is for his parents and all those that are near and dear to him.

I am sending you a photo taken of your other sister at the
Show in Cashel last June. Father Schmidt is in the background. The old home is there just as it was when you left it. Your sister made us promise a return visit with at least a day’s notice! And we promised. I felt like a thief and a bushman, going in without a moment’s warning.

Rockwell is its old self again, with its halls crowded with students. There was a reception of six scholastics and several Children of Mary. I had the opportunity of speaking to the whole college about the Missions on that occasion.

My visit to Kerry has been in great part successful. The Bishop will allow one and maybe two of his young priests to come out to Nigeria. He was extremely kind. When I went to Killarney he had left for Dublin! And it was fortunate, for I had a long and most interesting chat with his secretary. He (the secretary) is a real missionary, most anxious to help—that means much. In Dublin I met the Bishop, with the result just mentioned. Then I went on to Maynooth to see my four young friends. They are quite enthusiastic and mean to get others to join up. Your prayers and the novices’ prayers have done all this for S. Nigeria . . . But! . . . the four young priests are not in Nigeria yet.

I was in Cabra for their private Christmas concert and Nativity play. It was got up a second time for my benefit, as I could not be present for the 8th December when it was first staged. It was a delightful evening for musical people. Father Kearney was there, and so was Father Leen with Father Fennelly—two great musicians. But we all enjoyed the beautiful music, and the glorious pageantry of the Nativity play.

Tomorrow (Thursday) we are dining with the Archbishop of Dublin. It will give me the opportunity of telling him about the great work done by the Dominican Sisters in Killeshandra.

+J. S.

(*The Sister referred to is Sister Magdalen Walker, an Irish Sister of Charity.*)
Blackrock College, Dublin.
Christmas Eve 1926.

My dear Rev. Mother M. Xavier,
I am thankful for the gift you sent me on behalf of the Community.
Thanks also for the copy of the Constitutions.
Wishing you and all in Killeshandra renewed Christmas greetings.
I am,

Yours very sincerely,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
14th January 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Please find herewith a cheque for £5; two Registers; a covering letter from the Ursuline Convent, Sligo. I have written back to tell the Sisters I forwarded all the above to Killeshandra.
How are you and Mother Aquinas, and the Sisters, and Father White? I came back from Belfast last night. Today I am going to Vincent’s Hospital to begin the special treatment that is to free me from arthritis. Nobody is to know anything about it.

Turco (Michael Dawson) is almost cured. Won’t you thank the Sisters for the prayers they have offered up for this poor boy. Dr. Magennis says the cure is quasi-miraculous.
With all affectionate good wishes to you and all in Killeshandra.
I am, my dear Mother Xavier,
Yours very sincerely in Xto., +Jos. Shanahan, C.S.Sp.

P.S.—Is Sister Eileen with you or has she left?—J. S.

St. Vincent’s Hospital, Dublin.
19th January 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,
I thank you for sending on Dr. Finegan’s letter which I return herewith. The idea of getting a Bishop to preach the Profession
sermon is excellent. It will enhance considerably the already very solemn festival. Our Lord is bestowing tokens of exceptional affection on those who are to be His consecrated brides, in having such elaborate arrangements made for the 24th February. I am writing to Dr. Finegan to thank him for inviting me and Dr. Neville to his palace on the occasion of the Profession.

I am here in St. Vincent’s to get the progress of this arthritis I’m suffering from retarded, if not eradicated. Dr. Magennis will make me all right in a few weeks. There’s nothing painful about the treatment, beyond the shame of a healthy man being seen where only sick persons are to be found.

I hope you will succeed in having the chapel ready as I know you would wish to have that ready first of all in preference to all the rest.

May Our Lord grant you and Mother Aquinas and the Sisters very special graces during those remaining weeks that separate you and them from the crowning joy of your and their many years spent in the perfecting and beautifying of their souls for the great bridal festival of the 24th.

God bless you with Mother Aquinas and the Sisters. In His holy name I bless you, and send you my most affectionate good wishes.

I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

P.S.—I saw Father Leen in Blackrock. His stay with you did him good. He was happy to find Killshandra all he would wish it to be—and that’s no mean degree of perfection I can assure you.

Have you thought of the Arms and Seal of the Holy Rosary Congregation. Should this wait over?

St. Vincent’s Hospital, Dublin.
11th February 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

I have to thank you for the letter of invitation sent to me. I received it this morning here in Vincent’s.

The Crest is very good: Our Lord and His cross, the Holy Ghost and Our Blessed Mother through the Rosary are vividly represented.
Will you congratulate on my part Mother Aquinas for this beautiful missionary Crest.

I'm leaving today only, as I had to get a few final injections and will even have to return off and on to get the series completed. I'm ever so much better. I'm going down to Maynooth this evening to give a little private conference to the 4th Divines. On Monday I have got to return to Belfast for a series of talks on the missions.

I don't feel very much enthusiasm, for these injections have a most dulling and depressing effect on brain and nerves. However, it may be that that's what God wants. There will be little of the human appeal, and a little more of the Divine.

Tell the Sisters that they have with you and Mother Aquinas a place all to themselves in my Masses. I feel with them and with you something of the happiness that overflows from their hearts during those blessed days of preparation for the bridal festival on the 24th.

With all affectionate good wishes, and sending you my blessing, to you and all as always. God bless you.

I am, dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
23rd March 1927.

My dear Mother M. Xavier,

My fortnight in the religious and missionary atmosphere of Killeshandra was a period of undiluted happiness. I have to thank you and Mother Aquinas and the Sisters for your kind hospitality. My only regret is that a visit of this nature always brings with it for you and the Community extra work and fatigue. Then it must be such an annoyance for you to have an outsider almost residing in the Convent for such a length of time. But I hope visits of this kind will be short, few and far between until such time as the Chaplain's house is built so as to relieve you of the unpleasant burden of entertaining visitors.

I spent a few hours with Dr. Finegan. The poor man had been ill and in bed for nine days with the 'flu. He had just got up when I arrived. I told him about the proposal to send out five Sisters to
S. Nigeria, appointing one as Superior. He wished me to return to Killeshandra for Sunday next when he would make the official promulgation of the names of the Sisters who are to go to Africa. In view of my promise to lecture in Rathfarnham, I could not get back on Sunday.

I mentioned also about the possible consecration of Dr. Heerey in the Convent Chapel. He was quite pleased. Then I added that as a matter of course he would be the Consecrating Prelate. While pleased with the thought of being the Father of a Bishop he would not, in his great humility, accept under any circumstance this honour to which he, more than any other Bishop is entitled. This matter will be settled when Dr. Heerey comes over from L’pool.

He arrived there on Monday and will be in Ireland at the end of the week.

I had a letter from Rev. Mother Prioress, Cabra. She thought I would be in Killeshandra, and, on that account asked me to tell you that the Cabra Hockey Team are playing the Loreto Team in Rathfarnham for the Cup on Friday next!!!

In Cabra there’s nothing but visions of battles fought and lost and won and relost and recaptured—the whole world is agog looking forward to the gigantic struggle on Friday! I can feel exactly as the Sisters and students feel the excitement of the coming game. Blackrock Senior Boys’ Team is playing in the Semi-Final for the Schools’ Senior Cup on Thursday. If they win they are to meet Clongowes next week!! And you know what that means! Almost as much as the Cabra and Loreto match.

Won’t you tell the Sisters how happy I am and how good I feel for the hours spent in contact with the religious and apostolic spirit of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary.

God bless you and all in the Convent, and in His Name I bless you with Mother Aquinas and the Sisters.

I remain, My dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely in Christ,


P.S.—Father Leen was most anxious to hear all the news about Killeshandra. He is the most devoted friend the Convent has. All are well in B’rock, but! . . . three of their footballers have the ‘flu . . . and that’s simply awful . . .
Blackrock College, Dublin.
8th April 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Word has just been sent from Cabra that Rev. Mother Prioress (M. Colmcille) is ill. I’m going over in a few minutes to find out how she is. I am so sorry to have this bad news for you and Mother Aquinas and the Sisters. We will all pray with special fervour for poor Mother Prioress. I can only think of her as one of my own Missioners, just as dear to me as the dearest among them. And what I think of her is what I think of each and all in Cabra—and—needless to add, especially of those in Killeshandra.

Dr. Finegan has invited me to Cavan for Holy Thursday. I’ll go if I am still in Ireland, but I expect to be gone over to France with Dr. Heerey by that day. Dr. Heerey has been with you since I left and has, I hope, fixed definitely on Killeshandra for the Consecration ceremony.

I was in Sion Hill for a mission lecture to the students. I don’t expect any results. There was an African missioner there the day I arrived—Monday (the same who was in Cabra). He forestalled me by giving a most interesting talk on their missions. He asked for recruits for the Sisters. Four offered themselves. But what does it matter, so long as the cause of Christ is made known, what Society the missionary girls enter.

The date of my sailing is fixed too. It is the 15th June, a few days after the Consecration. I’m so glad to be once again in the battle. Whatever good I am there, I’m little or no use anywhere else. But my stay in Ireland has done me much good. I would go farther and say that it has done me good that I was badly in need of. My days with you in Killeshandra in spite of all my talking, were for me days of retreat in the truest sense of the word. I have always come away with good resolutions to try and get back to religious life as I see it practised under my eyes in Killeshandra.

God bless you and all in Killeshandra.

I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely in Xto.,

My dear Rev. Mother,

Thanks for your letter of 27th April. I am so pleased that the Holy Week ceremonies were for each and all of you a source of special graces and intense spiritual happiness. They make us appreciate more vividly Our Lord’s goodness to and love for us.

There was no need whatever for your writing to me at Easter. I did not expect any letter. I had been with you only a few days previously. Dr. Heerey gave me all the news. He too has a special affection for Killeshandra’s Missionary Sisters.

He brought over the sample of the Rosary you mentioned in your letter. He went to the biggest Rosary house in Paris, but could get nothing to match it; so he has taken over the ordinary Sisters’ Rosary beads that are supplied to all Sisters. I presume you will be of opinion that it is just as well to adopt them.

With regard to the cross that you are anxious to get in place of the one you have at present, it would have been well if you gave an idea of what you would like. Dr. Heerey has inquired about crosses. The sample he is taking over will not, I imagine, meet your requirements. As I have to spend this whole week in France, I may be able to get a few additional samples that I will bring along with me on my way back.

There will be but little time at my disposal when I get back to Ireland, but however little it may be, I will spend a few days with you in Killeshandra. I owe you and the Sisters far more than I could possibly express. My only regret is that I could not do more for you. Holy Providence is and will continue to be your guide and protector and father. Have unlimited confidence—the same you have had from the beginning in Our Blessed Lord and His Holy Mother.

The consecration ceremony and all it entails will add considerably to your already heavy work. I need not tell you my gratitude for what you are doing for Dr. Heerey and by the fact, for Nigeria and Our Lord.

Michael Dawson is exceptionally well. He may be back in Ireland before I sail for Africa. He will call at Killeshandra to thank you for the prayers offered up for his restoration to health. God has given
back his health to him. Won’t you pray now that he may consecrate it to God.

With kind and affectionate regards to you and the Sisters,
I remain,

Yours very sincerely in Xto.,

30 Rue L’homond, Paris (V).
4th May 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

You will receive from one firm in Paris a catalogue of engravings from which you might select what you think would suit you. The full size engravings would be sent along on your returning the catalogue with your choice marked.

From another firm you will receive some crosses to select from or reject, as the case may be, for the Sisters. It may be that you will have to get your own type of cross manufactured. It would be a matter then of finding out whether it might be as advantageous to get them made in Ireland as in France.

In any case, there is a Father here in Paris—an artist in these matters—who will render you every service you will ask of him, with pleasure:

Rev. Father Briault,
30 Rue L’homond (Vme).

I am pontificating today at Chevilly. The Superior General is presiding. I would have wished to be with you for the occasion, but one’s own wishes count for little, and rightly so, in the plans of Divine Providence.

Dr. Heerey is getting everything ready and expects to leave France for Ireland tomorrow—Thursday. His health has improved considerably.

God bless you with Mother Aquinas and the Sisters, novices and postulants.

With all affectionate regards,

Very sincerely yours in Xto.,
My dear Mother Xavier,

Another letter from Paris!!! Another but 'tis the last. I was down in Allex where there were great festivities in honour of St. Joseph. I have seldom listened to a more beautiful Mass music, to be followed by an equally exquisite Benediction in music, preceded by Vespers—all done by the students (132) and professors. I officiated at all the offices. The mission college in Allex is the seat of the Archconfraternity of St. Joseph. A Franciscan preached a beautiful sermon on St. Joseph.

Now all this is meant to lead up to the discovery of the brown Rosary beads you are anxious to secure for the Sisters. I have secured them! They are manufactured in the neighbourhood of Allex. The Franciscan monk, as a matter of fact, was wearing those brown beads. He will get the samples sent on to you through Allex.

Tomorrow I'm calling to see your dear Sister—Sr. Helene, in her Convent at 3, Rue St. Martin. I'm happy to be able to give you and her this pleasure which she will appreciate most of all. I'll tell her all about the whole family, since I have met all of them recently.

I came back from Allex today—travelling from 8.30 a.m. to 7.30 p.m. I fell in with three USA travellers in the carriage I was lucky to get a seat in. I didn't notice much their Irish brogue. We had a most interesting journey together. They had wonderful tales to tell of all they had seen and of all that had happened to them during their holiday in Europe.

With all affectionate good wishes to you and all in the Convent.

Yours very sincerely,


P.S.—I got the cross you sent over. There will be no trouble getting others like it in white metal. But I'll leave it here, and wait until we meet in Ireland before deciding.

J. S.
Larine, Maynooth.
17th May 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Mrs. Dawson would have gone to spend the day with you in answer to your kind invitation were it not that May had a cold and that the morning was wet. However, she hopes to be in Killeshandra for the consecration. Needless to say, she is delighted to hear nothing but excellent news about the Convent which is dear to her heart.

She has asked me to write to you and request you to be good enough to send an invitation card to Mrs. Eileen O’Keeffe, Cabra. She is wiring to you today because the answers are to be in before or on the 20th inst.

I spent two delightful days with you and the Sisters. I always come away with a feeling of intense happiness because you are all so happy with the peace that comes from God; and also with a sense of loneliness because of the parting from those I have such affection for. This is, of course, evident weakness on my part. I hope to overcome it as years roll by.

God bless you and all in Killeshandra.

With all affectionate regards.

Very sincerely yours in Xto.,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
6th June 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

I hope you and the Sisters have recovered from the severe fatigue incurred by the Consecration festivities. All those who went to Killeshandra were very pleased.

I remained on with Dr. Finegan until Wednesday. I was at Cabra for an hour on Thursday, and called over with Dr. Heerey on Saturday last. Then I was told that the “Queens” were to pay a visit to Killeshandra with the gift of their “subjects”. God bless them and Cabra!

I met your brother Tom on Saturday and yesterday. He is well.
I will be with Dr. Heerey on Monday next, then at the Anniversary Mass for poor Father Mulvaney. It is a year since he died.

I will let you know when I expect to be with you. But I will be with you for Corpus Christi Day as promised.

I'm getting all ready now so as to have all the free time possible towards the end of the month. The Sisters sent me hearty good wishes with their prayers on the occasion of Pentecost.

With all affectionate good wishes, and a special blessing for you and the Sisters.

I remain, dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,


P.S.—Will you please give the enclosed note to the Sisters.

J. S.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
9th June 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Please find herewith two of Sister Magdalen’s recent letters from Calabar. They will show you and the Sisters something of what the Sisters’ life in Nigeria is like.

I send also two letters written by Susanna Uzoaru. I know the girl. She is from the Parish of Owerri, was promised in marriage to “Jacob” who apparently has turned out to be a bad boy. She has resolved to bid farewell to matrimony and is now one of the first probable Postulants of the new Nigerian Congregation. This will interest the Sisters, and open up before their eyes new vistas of what part they will have to take in the work of evangelisation.

There is enclosed a card—referred to by Sister Magdalen, from the Superior General of the Sodality of St. Peter Claver, Rome. The Sisters of this Society work exclusively for Africa. They do not change their family name when entering Religion, hence the name of “Mary Falkenhayn”. You would do well to write to her and give her an account of the new Society, of the voyage of the first group of five to Nigeria; of their needs now and when they get there, having to get their future home built at Onitsha, with schools,
etc. etc. Mention my name when writing. I will write on my side and recommend you. The St. Peter Claver Society will supply funds if photos and articles are sent regularly—say, every month at least. It will be worth the while of the Sisters to begin to make themselves known.

I'm getting things squared up—hence this note and the attached letters.

God bless you and all the Sisters.
I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
20th June 1927.

My dear Rev. Mother,

A few lines in haste, to thank you and the Sisters for the pleasure you gave, and the blessings you obtained for me in inviting me to be present at the Corpus Christi Procession on the Convent grounds.

The Procession itself, the singing, the surroundings, the crowd of pious people, all formed a beautiful setting for the solemn inspiring march of Bishops, priests, nuns and laity, accompanying Our Lord from altar to altar. His Divine presence was palpably felt even as It used to be when He walked among His disciples and friends in the land of Juda.

I am deeply grateful to you and the Sisters for all you did to make Our Lord's short journey from the Sacred Prison of the Tabernacle a source of pleasure to our dear Lord Himself, and a source of blessings and happiness for you and the Sisters; and also for all of us who had the happiness of being present.

Dr. Leen was most interested in the details I gave him of the great day. The Missionary Hymn at the conclusion of the Procession was a perfect expression of the minds and hearts of the Missionary Sisters. In every one of its notes was felt the throbbing of hearts that beat in unison with the Heart of Jesus Christ. It was easy to feel that the wish of each Sister was and is to bring the whole human race to the feet of Christ, and for that they are ready to go to the end of the earth with and for Christ, for love of Him, and for love
of His poor children.

God grant them the realisation of this wish, the great and noble and divine given wish of their hearts for it is also the wish of the Heart of Christ.

God bless you and the Sisters.

I remain, dear Rev. Mother,

Yours very sincerely,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Missionary Convent of the Holy Rosary,
Killeshandra, Co. Cavan.
29th June 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

On my way from Belfast to Longford I stopped here for the day. I would have gone on but “Jack” is engaged and cannot let me have the car before tomorrow.

I met Sister M. Therese and Sister Brigid and nobody else! They met me officially representing the Government of the Convent. This is simply perfect. However, I hope to see all the Sisters for a few minutes this evening, as I may not have the opportunity of meeting them again before sailing.

I will see you in Cabra when I get back to Dublin on Friday. Sister M. Therese told me the loneliness they felt at your departure has not cleared away yet.

With all kind and affectionate wishes.

I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,


Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool.
13th July 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

I sail in two hours from now for dear old Nigeria. My last thoughts before I sail are centred on the House on the Hill. God bless you with each and all the Sisters.
I am happy with a happiness I never experienced until today. I know that the Sisters in Killeshandra have obtained this special favour for me from the Queen of the Holy Rosary and her Divine Son.

I felt somewhat lonely when leaving Killeshandra, but that does not in any way interfere with that other happiness I just mentioned. I am going back with new vigour and new determination to leave nothing undone that I can do to prepare the way for the Sisters of the Holy Rosary. They are an answer to prayer. This adds an additional sacredness to them in my eyes. I hope that acting the part of my great patron St. Joseph, I may, like him, be a faithful guardian of the Spouses of Christ, and daughters of Mary, entrusted by our heavenly Father to my care.

God grant that I may be true to the trust He has placed in me. How grateful I am to Him for all He has done for the Sisters. How grateful I am to you for all you have done for them. God bless and watch over you and them.

With all affectionate regards,

Yours very sincerely,


P.S.—I’ll write on the way. Dr. Heerey will tell you about my encounter with the Mt. Pleasant Training College Sisters.

J. S.

R.M.S. APPAM
21st July 1927

My dear Mother Xavier,

It is difficult to realise that we are about 3,000 miles away from Killeshandra at the moment I sit down here on board the APPAM to send you my first letter from Africa. Over to the east of our ship is Cape Verde, and in its vicinity, to the south, we see Dakar. So we are in African waters. The heat of Africa has come along to meet us and has taken up its quarters with us here on the APPAM.
The voyage has been very quiet and very uneventful, but most restful. Father White is a most delightful companion. I should be very sorry if he were not with me. We say Mass every morning in one of the little cabins. Sisters M. Therese and M. Brigid know all about Mass in those little cabins. Our Lord seems to be nearer to us than when we celebrate elsewhere. We feel He becomes once again a Missioner with His Missioners. He is more than ever near to us, and if anything, dearer than ever to us. We are His spoiled children. That one hour in the morning brings heaven and earth very near to each other.

All this will convey to you the fact that we are very happy. Often as we sit on the deck and look out over the heaving waves, we think of the Missionary Sisters who, in a few months’ time, will be sailing over these selfsame waves, perhaps in the same ship. We bless the sea, and bless the ship, and ask Our Lord to be with His Missionary Sisters as He is with us. There is no doubt about the particular care He will take of His consecrated spouses.

We will be in Freetown on Friday night. There we expect to go ashore and meet the Fathers and Dr. O’Gorman. On the following Saturday we expect to be in Port Harcourt. There are only 200 miles between Port Harcourt and Onitsha.

I cannot express my happiness at the thought of seeing once again my old friends, my old home with all that this world holds dear for me as a missioner. And I suppose the same old devil is there too, waiting for a renewal of the old, old battles. I’m coming back with a new regiment this time, so I hope to have the pleasure—I feel new confidence in facing the wily old ruffian.

I will write to you immediately I get to Onitsha. It is almost impossible to write on board a ship with all the distracting noises that prevent thought.

Dr. Heerey will have told you that I went to see the Sisters in Mount Pleasant. They will write to you. The more I think of the idea of sending the Sisters for a few months in a training college before they sail for Nigeria, the less I like it. I am convinced that Sister Magdalen in Nigeria knows more about school work than any Sister in the English Training Colleges. Her experience in Africa is invaluable. Will you think this over before coming to a final decision?

You know that you are seldom absent from my thoughts. I will
continue to give you and the Sisters first place in all my prayers and intentions at the offering of the holy Sacrifice. God bless you.

I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

R.M.S. APPAM.
22nd July 1927.

My dear Sister M. Therese,

Your good letter like all your letters to me added considerably to my happiness. It is the greatest happiness in my life to see people happy through being brought nearer to God, and being made to participate in a more intense degree in His happiness.

For any little thing I have done for you I am compensated a thousand times over in seeing you what you are, knowing the obstacles that were in your way; but also the exceptional graces Our Lord gave you to overcome them; and your generosity in co-operating with Divine grace to overcome them. The result is the intense happiness you now experience. What pleased me most of all in your letter—though every thought expressed in it pleased me—yet there was one that pleased me most of all, and it was your reference to your absolute submission to, and acceptance of, the work assigned to you by holy Obedience.

This was the only remaining obstacle. You have overcome it. God bless you! As a missioner you are called by Jesus Christ to co-operate actively as well as by personal sanctification and prayer in the salvation of souls. But your co-operation cannot be co-operation unless you do exactly what Christ tells you through obedience, and at that post alone which He assigns to you. How happy I feel now that you see this in the bright light of Divine grace that floods your soul. You are a missioner just as well as I am. It does not matter what section of the battle line you work and fight in under Christ’s orders.

May God bless you, and pour into your heart an ever greater
participation in His Divine Love. I am most grateful for your prayers. In return, you will have a special place in mine.

I remain, my dear Sister M. Therese,
Affectionately yours in Xto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

P.S.—I spent a few hours at St. Helen’s before sailing, but did not meet Mrs. Ryan or Betty, but I met your sister. They were all very well.

J. S.

R.M.S. APPAM.
22nd July 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

I enclose a letter for the Sisters and Novices. It is just to let them know that they are always in my thoughts and prayers with you, and all the other good souls it has been my privilege to meet.

It is written at random, and is meant to convey an impression rather than give news. Later on I’ll give news. I’m enclosing the letter in two envelopes.

God bless you once more, my dear Mother Xavier. I can never thank God sufficiently for all He has done for my spiritual welfare, in bringing me in contact with His own special friends—the Sisters in Cabra and in Killeshandra.

Yours most sincerely,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Catholic Mission, Onitsha.
22nd August 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

At last long I’m alone and have a couple of hours to myself. My first thoughts are for Killeshandra. And for very good reasons. I attribute to the fervent prayers of the Sisters the exceptional good spirit that prevails in dear old Nigeria. Never at any time was it anything like as good as it is now.
I have met all the Fathers, and visited already most of the Mission stations. In spite of all the difficulties, and of the very hard work that is being done, all are well and everything is well. This has been for me a source of intense happiness for which after God, I am grateful to you and all in the House on the Hill.

The whole Mission is looking forward to the coming of the first Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. Their coming gives new energy, raises new hopes with promise of exceptional spiritual results in the Mission. Each of the thirteen Mission stations is planning convents and schools for their Sisters. Needless to say, each station lays claim to the evident right of being first to have the Sisters.

I need not tell you how pleased I am to know that the Sisters are so anxiously expected by Christians and Missioners alike. We are getting the cobwebs removed from the Sisters’ old house in Onitsha; and a big job it is to get even that done.

Fathers Whitney, Davey, Gaffney, Finnegan, Kelly, Th. O’Connor, etc. etc., wish to be remembered very specially to all in Killeshandra. All are in the very best of health.

Father White is going to Ogoja to take Father Mellett’s place and keep Father Howell company. He is very well, but finds it hard to part with his old station at Aba.

The Sacred Returns are better than ever this year. You will excuse this hasty note; its one object being to let you know that all is well in S. Nigeria. I know that no news could give you greater pleasure.

You are seldom absent from my thoughts and prayers. Your presence in my thoughts is an incentive to work harder than ever for the cause of Christ and of those that are so dear to Him. Won’t you continue to pray for me and Nigeria. With all affectionate good wishes, and my blessing.

I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,

Jos. Shanahan.
My dear Sister M. Therese,

I wish to acknowledge your letter, and thank you for it. What you wrote did me good. Don’t think that a beggar like me does not take advantage of his opportunities when he can get in touch with souls who have in their power the obtaining of some part of those treasures he is hungering for.

If I have ever done anything for you, you have repaid me a thousand times over. So we are quits.

You will be pleased to hear that Nigeria is getting on famously. The fight for souls is becoming more and more acute. Heresy is spreading all over the country, but we can only man the positions God has assigned to us, and hold them against all comers. When reinforcements arrive, we’ll see what we can do to storm some of the new fortresses thrown up by the devil and his associates.

I wish you a very happy feast day. God bless and watch over you, and make you ever happier and happier by making you participate more intimately in the divine happiness of His own great, loving, generous heart.

I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Onitsha.
3rd October 1927.

My dear Mother M. Xavier,

In your latest letter, August 22nd, you mentioned that the Sisters are to sail in November. This is excellent news.

It may be very difficult for you to get things ready by that time. If so there is no reason why you should not wait until all is ready. A month or two, sooner or later, will make little difference in view of the importance of the Sisters’ first voyage to Nigeria. They must have what is necessary to start work soon after their arrival. We are getting things ready here, but find it difficult owing to the fact that we have to build and equip a Training School for Teachers, and
have it ready by the end of this year.

If the Sisters arrive at the end of November, or preferably, a little later on, we will have things sufficiently ready to enable them to do the rest themselves. I have written to Dr. Heerey in this sense. I know how anxious he is to be with us, and I thank God his health has improved so much during his stay in Ireland.

All goes very well here in Nigeria. There is a splendid spirit in the whole Vicariate. The coming of the Sisters has much to do with that, for they are God’s gift to us, in direct answer to our prayer for Missionary Sisters. It is as His Gift that the Sisters are being heartily and reverently welcomed.

Fr. Meehan arrived recently, and we are expecting Father Browne and Brother Francis at the end of this month.

In case you are in need of funds, will you apply to Father Stafford; we will arrange with him. I don’t know exactly how you stand for funds, but you know that I will meet all your expenses. So don’t be troubled under that score.

I am very well, but find I can’t meet, or rather get on a level with my work. It will take me some time and a liberal supply of patience. God bless you, Mother Aquinas, and the whole community.

I am, my dear Mother M. Xavier, with sentiments of deep gratitude,

Yours very sincerely in Xto.,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Onitsha.
15th October 1927.

Dear Mother Xavier,

Your letter of the 24th enclosing a £25 cheque for 94 Mass Intentions arrived yesterday. Many thanks for the Intentions. They are being forwarded to . . .

My letter written on the 12th inst. was late for the outgoing mail. Here it is, with the receipt for the £25 cheque.

Father Grandin is gone to Port Harcourt to meet Father Browne. There have been a couple of false alerts in connection with his arrival. I hope he has been to visit Killeshandra before sailing. I am writing to Dr. Heerey by this mail. He must feel somewhat upset
by the change in the sailing arrangements.

All goes well here. I know that this one phrase will contain more pleasant news for you than reams of news without it. Pardon me if I continue to insist on the necessity of storming heaven and our Blessed Lady, our great intercessor, with prayers for missioners—more missioners—soon and at any cost. Tell the Sisters that I have the utmost confidence in the success of their appeal for ten missionary priests for Nigeria before the end of October 1927.

Their request may be granted. May be granted in a manner different from what they anticipated, but I feel absolutely confident it will be—or may be has been granted. Later on they will know and understand how it has come about. Nothing more can be said just now, but prayers must continue to be offered up through Our Lady’s hands to Our Lord for more and more missioners for S. Nigeria: priests, sisters, teachers, etc. etc. by the hundred! . . .

We have no priests for our seminary and training college except one C.S.Sp. and one secular missionary priest who is to retire next year. And yet, seminary and training college are to be staffed and kept going at full blast. Our Lady can obtain this miracle for us in addition to all the other unseen miracles she is continually obtaining for us. She will do it in answer to the prayers of her loving and beloved daughters in Killeshandra.

God bless you and all in the Convent.

Yours very sincerely,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Onitsha.
27th October 1927.

My dear Rev. Mother Xavier,

A hurried line to acknowledge receipt of your letter enclosing a cheque for £15 for 53 Mass intentions. Many thanks. We need a couple of hundred Mass intentions as early as you can send them. I also received Sister M. Dominic’s letter. I will answer it and the other letters a little later on. I will have a day all to myself for that special purpose.

I cabled to you just now: “Let Sisters sail January. Convent Onitsha uninhabitable earlier.” It took me some time to make up
my mind, but in view of the impossibility we are in, of getting things ready for the Sisters’ arrival at Christmas, there was no use delaying any longer. Much more had to be done to the old building than was anticipated. The French Sisters left Onitsha exactly 20 years ago—in 1908. It will take us all our time to make it habitable before the end of January. Owing to its exposed situation, the building must be rendered sufficiently private to enable the Sisters to have the ordinary privacy ladies must have, no matter who or what they are—let alone being Religious.

Then we have the Training College on at the same time—and that must be up by Christmas too! So you see we are more busy than words can express. But there’s a ring of new effort, new hopes, new courage and happiness in the Mission such as has not been seen for years. Everything is going on well. All this is the evident sign of God’s blessing obtained for us through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother of the Holy Rosary.

This little contretemps of not sailing for Christmas coming as it does from Providence will be a source of new graces for the Sisters, and perhaps also an occasion for all of you to have a much needed rest or at least a slowing up of your work. Dr. Heerey won’t suffer by the delay. I have written to him today.

I am leaving in a few minutes for the seminary in Igbariam, to preside at Mr. John Anyogu’s exam. in theology. He will be our first priest, and will be ready for Ordination in two years. That will be a great day in the annals of Nigeria.

You, and Mother Mistress of Novices, and Sisters, novices and postulants are ever present in my mind. The thought of you makes me pray to Our Blessed Mother: “Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me, O Virgin and Mother.” This was St. Philip of Neri’s fervent prayer. So long as all those I love on earth are linked up with the most pure love of our sweet Mother in heaven, my love for them will partake of something of the purity of our Mother’s love for each of us.

There is a very particular intention I want you all to pray for. If it were God’s holy will that this intention of mine were to be willed by God, then indeed there would be hard days and hard battles ahead, but all would be welcome a thousand times if only it were God’s will that they should be faced. At present I don’t see. Won’t you ask our sweet Mother to obtain light and guidance from
her own Son.

With all the affectionate good wishes of my heart for your perfect happiness in union with Christ and His Mother, and for the happiness of all the Sisters.

I remain, my dear Mother M. Xavier,

Yours very sincerely in Xto.,

+Jos. Shanahan.

P.S.—Please don’t forget to tell the Sisters that I do really intend to write—and soon—and about Nigeria too.

J. S.

Onitsna.
12th November 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

It must have been very disappointing for the Sisters and for you that the original arrangements made for sailing in December were not adhered to. Had I known that the Catholic nurse was coming in December, my first cable would not have been sent. On account of that, I cabled to come on in December, even though things would not be in order here. For the Sisters’ sake, it is far better they sail in January. We will just have things only fairly right by that time.

The Governor General of all Nigeria was here today with his wife, Lady Thomson, on a visit to the mission and schools. The girls, about 150 out of a total of 1,300 schoolchildren—1,150 of whom are boys—presented Lady Thomson with a beautiful bouquet. There was a big drill display and the girls marched over like a regiment of veterans, to the astonished delight of all, especially of Lady Thomson.

All were pleased to hear that the Sisters would be here shortly to take over charge of the girls. The Governor said girls’ schools—with the education of girls generally—was the crying need of the hour in Nigeria. The Sisters are coming in the very best time possible, to meet and remedy this crying need.

I have more to do than ever before in my life, with the result that I was never at any time in better health than at present. All is going on very well, though numbers are small and work and age begin to tell on the older missionaries. I will have time to write to you again
when the present rush is over, and before the Sisters come out.

Sister Magdalen's school was classified "A Plus"; that is the highest mark of excellency and the only one obtained by any girls' school, and by only a few boys' schools out of the thousands of schools in the country.

I have been waiting for a free day to write to the Sisters, and give them some real news of the Mission. I can't find the time, and I feel ashamed of myself. Their letters to me bring along with them some of the happiness that reigns in that happy home on the Hill. I am just sending to each a mere acknowledgment, with a promise—alas that's all—and they begin to realise how little is in it—to write "at length at an early date".

God bless you and Mother Aquinas and the Sisters.

I remain, my dear Rev. Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Onitsha.
27th November 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

This is a kind of third P.S. to my other letters you will receive by this mail. I enclose my notes on the proposed Agreement between the Sisters and the Vicar Apostolic.

I enclose also a full sheet of the year's Sacred Returns. Father Mellett may need it. Finally, I acknowledge receipt of your cabled Mass intentions: "Forty-five donors, eighty-six deceased". Many thanks. Send on all you can get. We are very short just now.

The business part of the letter being fixed, I can now wish you and all in the Convent a very happy Christmas. It is about all I can do. You know that I will be with you on this last Christmas when all the members of the Missionary Society are together for the last time on earth. It is a solemn Christmas indeed, and one that shall ever be remembered in the Society. I will offer up one of my three Masses for all your intentions.

The Education difficulty will be gradually smoothed over. If we can get Missioners in sufficient numbers to man our Training Colleges for male and female teachers, and thus take full advantage of the Code, we will be in a stronger position than ever we occupied,
before ten years have elapsed. But God alone, through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother can show the way to the securing of missioners for Nigeria. Won’t you get all the prayers you can for that special intention.

God bless you my dear Mother Xavier.
Yours very sincerely,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

P.S.—Father Browne and Brother Francis arrived a few days ago. As usual, they were hard pressed to get ready during the last few days, so couldn’t spare time to go to Killeshandra, which they considered more difficult to reach than Nigeria! . . . Both are very well.

J. S.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
13th December 1929.

My dear Mother Xavier,

It is good of you to remind me of the great event that is to take place on the 24th February in both Killeshandra and Nigeria. And it was necessary for you to enter into details about the canonical examination. I am writing by this mail to Dr. Heerey to carry out the (Visitation) Examination at the time prescribed by canon law and according to the rules laid down in the canons. It is the first time that Sisters will have taken vows, final vows in S. Nigeria.

I feel somewhat uneasy about this examination in Nigeria. Although I am writing to Dr. Heerey I would like to write to him soon again after I have seen and consulted you about a couple of points. I want to avoid even the shadow of interference in matters that do not concern me. Yet since there is doubt as to whether or not a certain matter comes within my province I will have to ask you about it as you know all about this canonical procedure, while I don’t.

If a Sister was doubtful and hesitated to take final vows, asking for an additional period of three years to consider: what, from your experience would be a correct line of direction, in the interests of the Society, to give to such a soul? Experience alone can direct in matters of this nature—and experience we have not in the present
matter.
The 'flu is gone, never to return I hope. I’m finishing off all my annual reports etc. and hope to be free by Sunday next. I’m so glad that the Sisters are well in spite of everything.
Sending you and all in Killeshandra every blessing in my power with all affectionate good wishes,
I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,
Yours very sincerely in Xto.,
+Jos. Shanahan.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
16th December 1929.

My dear Mother Xavier,
A few lines to thank you for your letter in connection with the rights of the Sisters—in keeping with the constitutions, to postpone the emission of final or perpetual vows for a period of three years. This is a matter into which I have no right to enter. You are quite right in pointing it out to me. I am sending on your letter to Dr. Heerey for his direction.
It contains nothing personal so I presume you will be good enough to pardon my liberty in sending it on. Needless to say it will be treated as confidential and solely for our personal guidance in a matter of vital importance; the maintenance of a religious vocation in an hour of storm, caused by temptation allied maybe to a little selfish weakness.
All of us are grateful to God for his untold mercies to us in moments of this nature.
With all kind wishes and sending you and the community my blessing,
I am, my dear Mother Xavier,
Very sincerely yours,
+Jos. Shanahan.

P.S. Confidential: I have been asked to come back to Dublin at all costs for a little family gathering on Christmas evening at Maynooth. My brother, Dick, with a few members of the family are to be there from Co. Tipperary for the occasion.
What would you and the Sisters in Killeshandra think of my
coming away at about 3 o’clock on Christmas Day?

I am told that in reality you will enjoy the Christmas evening much better if you are left to your own selves—and on second thoughts I do believe that once the Pontifical High Mass is over you would rather spend your Christmas alone as every family loves to do. I have not written yet to say yes, or no. I will await a note from your own good self to whom I write in all sincerity and singleness of mind. I will probably go to Killeshandra a day or two before Christmas—but for a bit of a quiet rest and to say my prayers.

God bless you, J. S.

R.M.S. APPAM.
9th October 1930.

My dear Mother Xavier,

We passed Dakar an hour ago. It was the first view of Africa. All on board gathered to see it as if they had not seen land for years! This evening we will be outside Bathurst. In Bathurst there is an old mission, at its head is Father J. Meehan, Donegal. We all hope to be able to get off and see him and the mission. All in our group are in excellent health. The sea is calm as any of the lakes in the midst of which Killeshandra is set.

Africa and Africa alone is spoken of. The older men of the party supply the needful in the way of information—all of course “absolutely true”. No matter, all are happy as could be. The three Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus Society are just as enthusiastic as the rest of us. They proved themselves good sailors. They cannot thank God sufficiently for the special favour bestowed on them by their being chosen for Africa. On Holy Rosary morning, I offered up Mass for those we left in the “House on the Hill” and for those we are to see in a few weeks now.

On board there are several ladies—64 in all—many of them advanced in years and few endowed with half your vigour. Yet they are going to Africa. I do hope that within another six or eight months you will be with us—will be sailing over this same Atlantic over which we sail today . . . I will not write more for the present as I have to send just a few lines to the Sisters. But I cannot thank you sufficiently for your part in the joy that fills the hearts
of all in S. Nigeria today. It is to the prayers and sacrifices of those in the “House on the Hill” that I attribute the presence of all those fine young Missioners on board the APPAM. They appreciated more than I could tell you your kindness in sending along to the APPAM those parcels of cigarettes and cigars. What a pleasant surprise and how it made us think of you and all in Killeshandra. As for the cigars you sent me—they are the means of spending each evening a glorious hour looking out over the moonlit sky and sea.

For the present, goodbye and God bless you. By the time this reaches Ireland we will be in Nigeria. With all affectionate good wishes.

I am, my dear Mother Xavier,
Yours very gratefully in J. C.,

JOS. SHANAHAN.

Onitsha.
21st November 1930.

My dear Mother Xavier,

My first letter to you from Onitsha! Many thanks for your letter to me from Killeshandra. I won’t write much now about Nigeria and the Sisters. You must come and see them next Spring.

The Sisters are well. Their work in the school is simply perfect. Their health is good but their faces seem to have grown “too long”! I would like more of that happiness and joy without which life—even in Nigeria—is much more difficult. However, these are first impressions, you need not perhaps attach any importance to them.

The arrival of so many new Missioners has given new hope to the Mission. The German Fathers and Brothers are hard at work already in the Benue—while Father Whitney’s men are equally busy at Anua. I have not had a day to myself since my return. The ordination of Mr. John Anyogu is to take place on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. I’ll write again in about a fortnight for Christmas. I send you, Mother Aquinas, the Sisters, Novices, Postulants, all my most affectionate good wishes with my blessing. I hope all are very well.

I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,
Yours very sincerely,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.
My dear Mother Xavier,

A very hurried line—we are on our way to the Cameroons to attend a Conference of the Ordinaries of Nigeria. The day I was leaving Onitsha a letter came from the Very Rev. Mother Prioress General asking for my reasons—in writing—for asking that you be permitted to come to Nigeria this Spring. This is to be placed before the Council. I sent on a letter at once, and hope that the Council will agree to grant my request.

You know how anxious all of us are—with the Sisters who are *Cor unum et anima una* with us that you be granted this great favour, but it is a greater favour for us in Nigeria. Everything is going well in Nigeria. All are well. The Sisters were never better in health, never happier.

I could not get time to write to you for Christmas.

How can I thank you and the Sisters for all your beautiful letters and for the Christmas presents—letters and presents as voicing the kindly good wishes of all in Killinshandra which made us very happy.

As for my own health, I am very well now. At the time of landing and for the first two months I did not feel at all well. All that’s past and gone and I am—I think so at any rate—something like what I was wont to be! I will write to you later on when I get a little more time and the present rush is over.

If you come to Nigeria—and I know you will—all the rest of the news can wait until your arrival.

Dr. Heerey is very well too but tired.

With all affectionate good wishes to you and to all in the House on the Hill,

I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours ever affectionately in Xsto.,

+Joseph Shanahan.
My dear Mother Xavier,

Only a line to tell you I received the cable Mother Aquinas so kindly sent announcing your safe arrival in Dublin. I hope you are recovering from the effects of your long voyage home on the "APPAM". I was very pleased to get your letter posted at Freetown.

There was a great loneliness in Nigeria when you and Mother Brigid sailed from Port Harcourt. How could it be otherwise. The hundred and one little incidents associated with your visit to Nigeria are fondly recalled. No day passes that your name is not mentioned. The Sisters are very well and hard at work as usual. The Emekuku school is going on well.

I am just back from Anua where I spent 15 days visiting stations and confirming so as to help the young Fathers in their work. I am to go back again later on.

I will now wait until your letter from Killeshandra comes to announce your arrival back to the House on the Hill. I hope you found all well and happy. What a welcome there was for you! Father Mellett will have little to say now, though I am sure you will have great talks together about Nigeria.

With all affectionate good wishes, and a very special blessing from Nigeria.

I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Very gratefully and sincerely yours in Xto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Onitsha.
10th November 1931.

My dear Rev. Mother M. Xavier,

I wish you a very happy Feast, surrounded by your beloved children in your Missionary home in the House on the Hill. I will offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for your intentions.

Here in Nigeria you are fondly remembered not alone by the Missionary Sisters and Fathers but also by the multitudes of fervent Catholics: boys and girls, men and women, but especially the school
children, to all of whom your visit was a source of great happiness and edification.

Your anxiously awaited letter announcing your arrival in Kileshandra has just arrived. It is hard to realise you are no longer with us in Nigeria, so accustomed had we been to see you and talk to you as if you were one of our own veterans—and so you are, in heart and soul, in love and noble desires for the sanctification of every soul in your second home here in Nigeria.

I went over to the Convent to get “all” the news—for I knew the Sisters would have all the little details of your voyage home.

Sister Joseph made me sit down in your corner near the window while she read for me letters from Liverpool, Dublin and Kileshandra. The little group listened while our hearts were far away accompanying you all the way even to the avenue leading up to the Convent. Our hearts throbbed with joy in unison with the hearts of our fellow Missioners as they stood outside the little Oratory to welcome back from distant Nigeria their beloved Mother . . .

The Sisters are all well and so are the Fathers. All goes well in the Mission. My health has improved considerably. The rains have left us and our old friend the sun is all aglow with heat and light and happiness to be once again on his way back to the Sunny South.

My next letter will be for Xmas please God. I need hardly say I expect to hear again that you continue to be well after all the hardships of your long dreary voyage.

With all affectionate good wishes, and ad multos annos from all in Nigeria.

I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours ever gratefully in Christ,


Catholic Mission, Onitsha.
25th November 1931.

Xmas 1931

My dear Mother Xavier,

I wish you with all the Missionary Sisters, Novices and Postulants
in Killeshandra a very happy Christmas. We will have Pontifical
High Mass here in Onitsha. That Mass will be offered for the
Missionary Sisters, for all without exception, both in Killeshandra
and Nigeria.

The Sisters are well both in Onitsha and Emekuku. So are the
Fathers. The dry season is on in full and the heat is intense.

My health is sufficiently good to permit me to keep on visiting
some parishes and administering the sacrament of Confirmation.

You will excuse me for not writing at length. This I cannot do in
spite of the best of good will, but you know that I am with you in
all my prayers and desires.

I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Ever gratefully and sincerely yours in Xsto.,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Onitsha.
2nd March 1932.

My dear Mother M. Xavier,

I wish you and all the Sisters a very happy Easter. I hope you and
all are very well. I heard with great pleasure that there are fifteen
new postulants in Our Lady’s Missionary Convent in Killeshandra.
One for each of the glorious fifteen centuries of Ireland’s unfailing
love of and fidelity to Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother—to our
Jesus and our Mother! God bless the fifteen new missionaries.

I sail for Europe on the 13th April, on the APPAM.

The Sisters here are all very well. The profession of Sisters M.
Columba and Felim was the occasion of great rejoicing among all
the missionaries in S. Nigeria. The Fathers gathered in from the four
ends of the Vicariate. The ceremony had the effect of a good retreat
for all of us.

As usual I have but little time to write. But it does not much
matter now, since I am to meet you a short time after Easter. I will
write to you again before I leave Nigeria.

With all good wishes and sentiments of deep gratitude,
I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely in Xsto.,

Onitsha, S. Nigeria.
16th March 1932.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Many thanks for your kind letter with all your good wishes on the occasion of the feast of my patron, St. Joseph. The Sisters on their side have written to me beautiful letters, so that all in Kille-shandra are here in spirit with their fellow missionaries in S. Nigeria to take part in the celebrations in honour of St. Joseph.

I know—but of course I am supposed not to know anything whatsoever—that the Sisters in Onitsha are preparing a little private concert in honour of St. Joseph. This they are doing at the cost of much extra work and in addition to their usual heavy day’s duties. It will be my last St. Joseph’s day in S. Nigeria and it will be the happiest from the Missioner’s point of view. Never before was the Mission so prosperous nor its future anything like so encouraging as it is today.

I am sailing from Nigeria under the patronage of St. Joseph, the 13th April . . . As regards the objects and photos you have asked for, everything possible will be done to secure them within the limits of the short time at our disposal. I am to bring some along with me in April.

In a few weeks I will be on sea—so there is no need giving you any news about Nigeria. I would rather wait until I meet you—now an old missionary like myself—and tell you all viva voce. I can never thank you sufficiently for all you continue to do for the cause of Christ in S. Nigeria. The new buildings you are contemplating putting up show how undaunted you are in presence of humanly unsurmountable difficulties. God bless you for having such unlimited confidence in His holy providence and such heroic fortitude to dare the impossible for His sake.

I know that Dr. Finegan and Dr. Heerey have approached the V. Rev. Mother Prioress General beseeching her to leave you and dear Mother Aquinas in Killeshandra for another three years at least. God’s interests in Africa seem to demand this without any doubt. I know that the Dominican Order will never hesitate before any sacrifice where the interests of God are concerned. I will call on Rev. Mother Prioress General immediately I land in Ireland convinced that a personal interview would be better than any letter.
I am sending on now a personal letter to her. I am so sorry to hear that she is not well.

With all affectionate good wishes and sending you a very special blessing,

I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very gratefully and sincerely in Xsto.,


P.S.—I am having a special memento at the offering of the Holy Sacrifice for the intention of your beloved Sister in Boulogne. I hope to meet her once again in perfect health as she was when I met her for the first time a few years ago. J.S.

Plymouth.

1st May 1932.

My dear Mother Xavier,

We have just arrived in Plymouth—It is 5 o'clock p.m. I want to send you and all in Killleshandra my most affectionate greetings by this first opportunity from Plymouth. You will probably get this note on Wednesday at latest—on that day I hope to be able to get across to Dublin.

And how are you, my dear Mother Xavier? How is Mother Aquinas, Mother Dominic, Mother Brigid, Sister M. Therese, etc. etc.? How happy I am at the thought of meeting you all in a few days. I don’t know what day I can get to Killleshandra as I have to get a room somewhere in Dublin—but I’ll go as soon as I can possibly manage to get away from Dublin.

And Nigeria! Ah, it nearly broke my heart to leave it. The Sisters were wonderfully good and generous. They did all they could to make the final parting easy. The Fathers did likewise—and so did the thousands upon thousands of Catholics and Catechumens—they all made me promise I would return in a couple of years—they would not consider my departure in any other light except as a temporary separation. They wired to me in Lagos to let them know—the Sisters did—what month in ’33 I was returning! . . . So I am at long last separated physically at any rate from Nigeria.

The Sisters were very well when I was leaving. All was going on very well in the Vicariate, in spite of poor Dr. Kennedy’s accident
and Father Meehan’s hurried departure.

All preparations were being begun for Dr. Heerey’s reception this year. In this way everything looks bright in Nigeria.

Dr. Heerey and the Mission Council insisted on my bringing back the “Isis” with me. It is here on the APPAM—it is a fine gift from His Lordship and the Vicariate. What a souvenir of Nigeria and Killeshandra! . . . I am leaving it with the Morris people to overhaul it. I hope to give you a few more lessons up and down the avenue in Killeshandra and finally out the Cavan roads. You must become an expert driver in case Holy Providence would send you back to Nigeria for another visit, in which case you could be your own chauffeur.

The rest of the news for the happy day when I meet you once again in Killeshandra.

I send to you, to Mother Aquinas, to all the Sisters, my most affectionate greetings. I offered up the Holy Sacrifice for you all this morning.

God bless you, and all.

I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very gratefully and affectionately in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

P.S.—I am in excellent health!—The voyage was alright as those voyages usually are—you know what they are. I said Mass every morning except on two mornings. There were two African Mission Fathers with me. J. S.

Blackrock College, Dublin.

3rd June 1932.

My dear Mother M. Xavier,

Now that I am settled down to my new life in my new home in Blackrock, I want to thank you and the Sisters for the warm welcome you gave me on the occasion of my recent visit to hospitable Killeshandra.

I know that I was not my old self on that occasion, much as I would have liked to be, as if no changes had taken place, and the circumstances of my missionary life had remained unaltered. I have got to recognise that a complete change has taken place and that
the past is gone and for ever.

I know that, as a result of those changes, I am somewhat odd; aye and maybe unreasonable too. Please God this is only a passing phase that will leave undisturbed and undiminished the sincerity of my gratitude and affection for you, for Mother Aquinas and for all those in Cabra and elsewhere who have contributed so magnanimously towards the evangelization of Nigeria, in bringing into existence the Missionary Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Rosary.

Dr. Heffernan, Bishop-elect of Zanzibar, is here. He is to be consecrated in Blackrock on the 19th inst.

Dr. Kennedy is back from Paris. His eye will be alright. We are all invited by the Very Rev. Provincial to a dinner in Rathmines on the sixth June.

The “Isis” is being rapidly overhauled and may be over any day. It will come in without tax—when it does come I’ll take it up to let you see it and give me your opinion on the way the work has been done. We must have a few more lessons down the avenue and maybe a short trial spin to Belturbet and back.

The sun is glorious just now. There’s every promise of beautiful weather for the Eucharistic Congress. And this is the end of the first letter I have written to anybody in Ireland since my return.

God bless you now as ever, my dear Mother Xavier,

I am, yours very sincerely and gratefully in Xsto.,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
10th June 1932.

Dear Mother Xavier,

When I called to wish Very Rev. Mother Prioress General a happy feast yesterday, I was agreeably surprised to find her very much improved in health since I saw her a fortnight ago. I told her there was only one remedy that would operate immediately and give her back her health—and that was a few fine days up in the Dublin mountains in this beautiful weather. I promised to take her along in the “Isis” when it gets over to Ireland.

I was not convinced that the Rev. Mothers and Sisters agreed
entirely with my proposal, but at all events the idea of the proposed drive took us all away up on the hills and in imagination at any rate and in spirit—we talked of the brown heather, the larks singing, vistas of heavenly beauty—we had a most enjoyable little feast day chat of old times—at least I had. In Cabra they are always happy, something like what you are in Killeshandra. It does one good to spend an hour there, but I always spend much more than that.

I was invited, very graciously, to see the exhibition of beautiful work done in the many Dominican Convents of Ireland. To a man from the Bush it looked like a scene from fairyland. Somebody else will have to describe it. I couldn't.

Dr. Heffernan is to be consecrated here in Blackrock on the 19th inst. Dr. O'Brien of Kerry is the Consecrating Prelate: Dr. Neville and Dr. Willson the Co-Consecrators.

After the Eucharistic Congress I will go to tell you all the news. Meanwhile may God continue to grant you very special blessings. It is a great sacrifice for you and all in Killeshandra not to be able to assist at the Great Congress; one day you will take a leading part in the great final meeting of the glorious Church of Christ gathered around Our Lord above in Heaven.

With all affectionate good wishes,
I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely in Xsto.,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
10th June 1932.

My dear Mother Xavier,

With regard to the motor accident in Onitsha, I happen to know all about it, for I was in Onitsha when it occurred. I also know why the Sisters, Mother Agnes in particular, and Sister Joseph did not write. I insisted on their not writing to you about it. The same holds good for Sisters M. Catherine and M. Rose.

It was an accident pure and simple without any blame soever for it on Sisters M. Catherine and M. Rose.

Mother Agnes had come from Owerri with Sisters M. Columba and Felim. The Emekuku driver was with them. That same evening the driver went back to Emekuku with the two Sisters involved in
the accident. Sister M. Catherine was driving. At Ihiala she gave the wheel for a little practice—I presume—to Sister M. Rose.

Now at the foot of the Ihiala hill, on the Owerri side—there is a very deceptive hidden turn in the road which has brought many a motor driver to grief, including the Emekuku Fathers—and they can drive (their car turned over there not so long ago)—also Weeks’ car met with an accident and several others.

The driver was sitting in the car. He said absolutely nothing as the car approached the turn. Taken by surprise, Sister M. Rose turned the car a little too sharply with the result that it came in contact with a tree, injuring the wing and other parts of the car. All of us have had accidents of this nature. Some such accident is necessary to make drivers more cautious. Every driver gets his or her lesson, and the lesson is never forgotten.

The Sisters were not hurt in the least, nor were they frightened or upset. They thanked God of course for having protected them. They walked back to Ihiala and got Father Birnle’s lorry and went on to Emeke.

It would be a pity to take extreme measures and forbid the Sisters to ever again drive because of this—after all—small accident. By all means let them have a driver with them on long journeys, but there is no reason why they themselves could not take the car out on short journeys without a driver.

The Mother General of the Holy Child Jesus Nuns sent out a car to the Sisters in Calabar. One of the Sisters drives that car—no driver goes with her.

But I would suggest that the Sisters be well taught how to drive by Emenike for instance.

I give you my opinion for what it is worth. I do think it is very useful for the Sisters to know how to drive a car and to drive it with the reservations mentioned. To forbid them to drive because of an accident which could not be attributed to negligence on their part would be a pity. I could adduce many arguments in proof of what I state. It is hardly necessary since I do not want to do more than state what has happened: why the Sisters did not write: give you my views with my opinion on the undesirability of prohibiting the Sisters altogether from driving a car provided certain restrictions are imposed.

I know something of the intense suffering which the accident has
already caused to the Sisters. The lesson has been a terrible one. You will pardon me for giving you my opinion—I do so as a friend and in the best interests of all concerned—for no other reason and in no other capacity have I written.

I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours sincerely and gratefully,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
17th August 1933.

My dear Mother Xavier,

I called to see Mrs. Jos. O’Connor and her daughter May at Cashel yesterday. Mrs. O’Connor gave me a great welcome even though she knew I was coming to talk to her about May’s entering Killeshandra. This I was doing at the request of May’s sister, Sister M. Agnes, Presentation Convent, Maynooth.

May is most anxious to join and Mrs. O’Connor sees no difficulty whatsoever in her doing so except one and that is of a financial nature. Having to find the full dowry for Josephine who is joining the Carmelites it would be impossible for them to find a second dowry for May. I told her I thought there would be little difficulty in overcoming this financial difficulty in view of the fact that May is a highly educated girl and the making of a first class Missionary Sister; that you would be able to arrange matters with Dr. Finegan.

May told me she had failed in History and so did not get her Matric. I ventured to assure her and her mother that the Matric did not matter so much for she had other aptitudes that would more than compensate for this small matter of not being able to remember a lot of dates of battles and kings, wars and misdeeds—I hope you won’t see any difficulty in overlooking this Matric business.

Finally she said that she could not enter until Josephine had left. This her mother would insist on. I said I thought you would see no objection to this delay which is indeed inevitable so long as she had made up her mind to enter.

I promised to write all the above to you leaving it to you of course to do what you think best. I am so glad May is entering. She is very
like you in every way. She will take your place in the distant missionfield in Nigeria and spend the wonderful gifts God has bestowed on her in making Him to be ever better known and loved. Her spiritual children will have no difficulty in seeing in her the living image of Him whom she will carry in her heart and soul and whose Life and Love she will make visible in her own life and love of Christ and His dusky children.

I have spent a few days in Co. Tipp. and am going back again to Dublin in a day or two.

The newly elect Bishop of the Gold Coast, Mgr. Porter of the African Missions and a great Nigerian Missionary has written to me to assist at his consecration on the 10th September in England as Co-Consecrator. I am going there a few days before the 10th. I hope that you and all in Killeshandra are well.

I promised the Sisters home from Cork that I would call sometime to see them before they return to Cork. I hope to call some day.

God bless you with all in Killeshandra.

I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours sincerely in Xsto.,

Jos. Shanahan.
Exodus and Entry

(1928)

The arrival of the first group of Holy Rosary Sisters in company with the newly-consecrated co-adjutor Bishop Heerey in Nigeria was the occasion of much rejoicing.

How good God is in working such wonders

. . . . . . . . . .

to make us almost believe

that even we did something.

During the first months Bishop Shanahan took the Sisters round the mission stations, introduced them to the people and their ways and explained the purpose of their coming, making it quite clear that

The Missionary Sister has a rightful place

in the phalanx of the apostles of Christ.

A group of young girls—all pagans and fiancées of young Catholic teachers were awaiting initiation in religion and in housecrafts. Plans and programmes for schools were studied and time was spent on the serious study of the Ibo language.

While the Bishop entered wholeheartedly into this gradual initiation of the Sisters into the missionary life and work he became more and more conscious of the crying need for more missionary priests.

This seems impossible now but I believe and have full confidence that it will take place in answer to prayers . . .
My dear Mother M. Xavier,

The Sisters are to be in Port Harcourt, together with Dr. Heerey, within the two last days of this very week! The whole Mission is in a state of joyous excitement in expectation of the arrival of Bishop and Sisters.

Tomorrow morning I’m off to Port Harcourt with motor cars and lorries to meet them, and tell them the gratitude and welcome that fill our hearts. It all goes back to you in Killeshandra and Cabra; to Dr. Finegan and Dr. Leen, etc. etc., right on to the Divine Heart of Jesus Christ, who alone has wrought this new miracle among the children of men: the creation of a new family of Missionary Sisters. . . . But I must not write any more on this subject. I know my heart and the heart of Nigeria is attuned to yours and to the heart of good Mother Aquinas, to the hearts of all the Sisters, novices and postulants in the Convent, and to the hearts of all our friends. How good God is in working such wonders, and in asking us all to join him in this work finally to make us almost believe that even we did something. This, too, is just like what our most loving Father does with His children.

The Convent is fairly ready. Hard work has been done by the Fathers and Brothers and carpenters, plasterers, labourers, etc. to get it into shape before the arrival of the long-expected Sisters. They will write and tell you all about it.

I didn’t write to acknowledge your letter, cheques, Mass intentions, Xmas letters nor Xmas greetings. I knew you would understand the delay. Nor did I write to the Sisters before their departure from their dearest home on earth and their dearest friends on earth. I considered those moments too sacred for the intrusion even of a letter from Nigeria. Those moments belong exclusively to Our Lord and His beloved children. His heart alone can commune with theirs on such occasions. And as you took your children in your arms and pressed them to your big, warm, generous heart, He too at that very moment took both you and your daughters into His divine arms, and pressed you all to His Divine Heart—and that Divine embrace is to last forever. It is only the beginning of the final episode that is to lead you and your spiritual daughters along
with Him through the sacred way and along the blood-stained path that leads through Calvary to heaven. To be with Christ and to participate in His glorious mission of Redemption and Salvation: can anything be more glorious! The glamour that surrounds Nigeria comes from His presence there!

On behalf of Christ in Nigeria, on behalf of His missioners and children, I thank you, Mother Aquinas and the Sisters in Cabra, beginning with dear Mother Prioress—Rev. Mother Colmcille, for your great part in the bringing of Nigeria to the feet of Christ.

I am particularly grateful to you, to the Sisters, to Dr. Finegan and to Father Mellett, for the magnificent gift of £1,000 which you give to Nigeria in sending us out the Sisters free of all the expenses connected with their outfit and sea voyage.

The whole Vicariate in its Missioners is assembling at Onitsha to welcome the Bishop and the Sisters. Father White is coming from far-off Ogoja. I feel certain the glorious new outfit he had on when bidding farewell to Onitsha will show traces of hard days in the bush. But his hearty laughter will not be the less hearty for that. Father Whitney is coming down from Eke with Father Davey. Poor Father Pat had arranged to come down to Port Harcourt and take special photos in addition to giving a special welcome to the Sisters—but obedience ordered him to finish up the parish work in Eke. Father Pat is taking over from Father Davey who is going home.

The photograph of the new altar is before me as I write. It compels me to add an additional word of gratitude to God.

This was to be only a half page note, and here I am rambling away on the fourth page.

All goes well in the Mission. I don’t bother much about the ever-present difficulties. I see with my own eyes that difficulties are indispensable instruments in the service of God to keep us all near unto Him. Ever-present dangers, ever-threatening disasters compel people to think of Him who alone can ward them off—and disasters keep people ever on their guard.

Won’t you keep on praying for the Missionary priests. They will come in answer to prayer just as the Sisters have come in answer to prayer, joined to continued effort on our part to face the impossible with full confidence in God. That is the impossible He asks us to do. Some of the priests are going home for a rest. Most of
them badly need a few months to repair the wear—spiritual and physical—of many years spent among sinners, and in the haunts of sin, seeking for those who may accept eternal life in exchange for death. Oh, the poor, poor people sinners are! Who will ever understand the value of the inestimable gift of faith, and the additional grace of being born in a Christian land of Christian parents.

My thoughts go back involuntarily to that land of all the Sisters that is holy Ireland—and I am in a hurry to go to Port Harcourt! We all feel like we used to long, long ago, when, as little lads, we went to meet a sister or brother coming home on holidays. And isn’t it good to feel the association of happy days—childhood renewed once again—when the snows of many years have fallen thick on one’s head!

With all affectionate good wishes,
I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,
Yours very sincerely,

+Jos. Shanahan.

P.S.—I received the letter and cheque for £193. 12. 0 you enclosed in yours. I acknowledged both to Mr. Lynch.

J. S.

Onitsha.
13th February 1928.

My dear Mother M. Xavier,
The Sisters are in Onitsha since Saturday evening. God bless them, and God bless you and all in Killeshandra. They are happy and very well. They got a warm welcome from all.

Heartiest good wishes to you and all in Killeshandra, and affectionate regards to your own good self.
Yours very sincerely,

+Jos. Shanahan.
(A note in Mother Xavier’s writing on top of this: “First letter after the arrival of the Sisters”.)

Onitsha.
4th March 1928.

My dear Rev. Mother Xavier,

It seems a new world since the arrival of the Sisters with Dr. Heerey. Three weeks ago today they arrived in Onitsha. They are very well even though they happened to come into one of the warmest spells of weather we have had, even in Nigeria, for many years. They will tell you all about it and about their life in their new and very strange surroundings.

Dr. Heerey is very well. He is gradually taking over much of my work. In a couple of years it will matter little when I am called away. In this I find the greatest consolation of my missionary life. By that time, too, the Sisters will be well into their work.

For the present there is little news to give. Their new school building is only just started. It will take six months to finish it. As soon as possible the Sisters—three of them—will go to Calabar to get initiated into Sister Magdalen’s school method which is by long odds the best in the colony.

I am deeply grateful for all the nice things you sent us. Sister Joseph and Sister Brigid I presume with her, sent us over a series of delicacies for the gathering of the Fathers assembled to greet Bishop and Sisters such as has never been seen in Onitsha. All the Fathers promised to return to Onitsha any number of times in the year and at short notice. The Fathers, one and all, are highly pleased with the accomplished religious that the new Missionary Sisters show themselves to be.

It will take me some time to get accustomed to the presence of Sisters in this parish that has been without Sisters for twenty years exactly. I will have little need to write from this day onward. Little by little I will take the place God means me to take. Mother Dominic is getting on, as far as I can see, very well as Rev. Mother. I will take every possible care not to interfere in any way with the Sisters or their Community life. I will leave them to the Holy Spirit in all matters pertaining to their religious life.
Thanks for the Mass intentions you send me so frequently. The new altar looks beautiful, even in the photo.

How good God is to have left you and Mother Aquinas to perfect the work you have begun at Killeshandra. God grant that Dr. Finegan be left for many more years to extend his paternal care to a work that’s so dear to him. You know better than any words of mine could express, my gratitude for all you have done for Jesus Christ and His poor children in Nigeria. It is in His Name as Ordinary of this Vicariate that I write these lines.

God bless you one and all. Remember me to the Sisters. From this on, they should not take the trouble to write to me. Their own Sisters are now at the front and will give them all the news about Nigeria.

With all kind good wishes,

I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely in Xto.,

†JOS. SHANAHAHAN.

Onitsha.
11th March 1928.

My dear Mother Xavier,

I forgot to enclose the receipt for the £16 you sent me for sixty-one Masses. Please find it herewith.

All goes well with the Holy Rosary Sisters, Onitsha. They are over the first month of their missionary life, and it was from the point of view of the climate a desperate month. Why, all the old veterans were gasping for a breath of air! The Sisters weathered it without a murmur.

The situation is and will be for some time very trying for them, as I mentioned in my last letter; for their own special sphere of work remains very undefined through no fault of theirs or ours. When their schools are up and the necessary quarters fixed up for their girls, things will be much better.

They have started to learn Ibo, and are doing very well. In six months they will have a good idea of it, and will be able to understand the people and make themselves understood by them. I go over with one of our best young Seminarists—John Anyogu—38
years old, and in his 3rd year’s course of Theology, to give them, with him, lessons in Ibo. This is most important. If the first Sisters get well started, all will be well in the future.

There will be inevitable little difficulties in their community life at the start. Onitsha is not Killeshandra. They will need all the encouragement and sympathy you can send them; above all, absolute confidence and trust in Jesus Christ and Our Blessed Mother. Their affection for each other must be so deep that little surface difficulties must not be treated as anything else than passing and inevitable accompaniments of daily life in this world.

Dr. Heerey has gone to Calabar. He will be back soon. He is in a position to render considerable service to the Sisters. I feel more and more convinced that the less I have to do with them directly, the better it is for them and their work.

They will tell all about themselves and what they are doing to make this coming Easter a source of exceptional happiness for all in the parish. They have undertaken the preparation of the singing. The boys are most willing to learn, and the Sisters capable and willing to teach them. So all goes very well.

God bless you, my dear Mother Xavier.

Yours very sincerely in Christ,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Onitsha.
14th May 1928.

My dear Mother M. Xavier,

I received your letter written on the 23rd April, after your return to Killeshandra from Cabra. I thanked God that you and Mother Aquinas were still in the House on the Hill. The Sisters were overjoyed when they heard the good news.

I am sorry that my recent letters bore evident signs of what in your charity you call the “flu”. In reality, I was suffering from a fit of bad humour because things were not moving as I wished ... as I! ... I wanted priests to come along just as if I had taken over the management of affairs from the hands of Divine Providence.
I'm back to normal again at my right place somewhere about zero, and by the fact God has given back to me His Peace. And I am as happy as ever I was.

I'm very, very sorry for the peevish letters I wrote to you under the influence of my own particular dose of selfish flu. Even out here, in Nigeria, the poor Sisters have not escaped the effects of this "fluish" temper of mine. My confidence in God had suffered. Your prayers in Killeshandra have obtained for me from God's mercy a return of that most priceless gift of God, "confidence in God".

Killeshandra is as dear to me today as ever it was, aye, even dearer, since here alongside of me are its first fruits, the first five Missionary Sisters. Nothing on this earth can ever alter my heart where Killeshandra is concerned.

I will continue to write as I have done all along, only I must try and be less selfish—a man can never be altogether unselfish, in spite of his efforts in that direction. Your letters, with those of Mother Aquinas, and of the Sisters, give me renewed strength with courage to undertake what at times I feel too cowardly to dare—because of my selfishness—for God's sake and the spread of His Kingdom here in Nigeria.

At long last, I am compelled by Providence to stir myself up and do something to get priests. You have, I feel certain, obtained for me the grace to see what is to be done. All I have to do now is to go ahead—and it isn't easy! Won't you continue to pray that God may now give me sufficient fortitude to work in the direction He has pointed out, hard as the path seems to a weak man. Soon I will be able to be more explicit. I am writing to Rome where the final decision on this matter is to be given.

And the Sisters in S. Nigeria? They are as good as you would wish them to be. They are all I could possibly wish them to be. They will be excellent Missioners in the future because they are excellent Missioners today, because they were excellent Missioners before they left Killeshandra. It is in Killeshandra that the missionary spirit is given and the missionary heart and soul are formed. And there the free activities of the missionary are already under the direction of the Holy Ghost producing their marvellous fruits of sanctification for the Missionary Sisters themselves and of conversion for the poor benightedpagans. Whether in Killeshandra or Nigeria, each Sister is in the hands of God a chosen instrument for the direct
application to souls of the fruits of the Redemption.

The three Sisters in Calabar are hard at work getting "Montessoried". They have a rather hard time of it, which is excellent for them. Also, they are more than equal to any hardship that comes their way. They will soon be fit to take over their own particular section of the fighting line to be assigned to them, in this very concrete world of ours with its boon companions, the flesh and the devil. The Sisters are well equipped to stand up against this three-headed monster.

The two Sisters that remained here in Onitsha are doing very well. It is great training for all of them thus early in their career, to be compelled to live under circumstances that test their valour as soldiers of Christ's missionary army. In spite of the changes, they are observing their Rule, and keeping the peace and happiness of God intact under the stress of many hardships. The old Missioners feel that in these young missionaries sent to them by Our Lord, they have trained, skilful and determined soldiers of Christ, who are able to hold their own against the legions of the wicked one.

God grant that we may have many, many more Sisters to come to our assistance in a struggle that the older Missioners can no longer continue singlehanded. All of us have the utmost confidence in the prayers of the Sisters. This alone is a source of new energy and renewed confidence in God.

Never before was the mission staff so reduced in numbers, and in spite of it, the mission is going ahead and more than holding its own.

Father Grandin, my old Vicar General, has received a cable announcing his appointment as Prefect Apostolic of Oubangui-Chari in the very heart of Africa, south of Lake Chad!

I thank God that I have been prepared for this present situation by the continued assurance of my saintly Missionary Sisters in Killeshandra and S. Nigeria that Holy Providence is arranging things in this particular way, in view of the coming of many Missioners in the near future. This seems impossible, but now I believe and have full confidence that this will take place in answer to the prayers that go up to heaven from the 'House on the Hill'.

I wish to be remembered to all the Sisters. I will keep my oft-made promise to write and thank them for the happy days their long letters to me have brought with them to Nigeria.
With all the affection this old heart of mine is capable of, I send my blessing to you, dear Mother Xavier, to Mother Aquinas, and to all the Sisters, novices and postulants. God bless you.

Yours very sincerely in Xto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Port Harcourt, S. Nigeria.
20th May 1928.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Another Nigerian Missioner is leaving Nigeria for Oubangui. Monsignor Grandin has been chosen Prefect Apostolic of this far away Prefecture.

He is sailing tomorrow for Europe. He has promised to call to Ireland and to Killeshandra to give you the latest news of your dear children, the Sisters.

I wrote to you recently so there is no need to add anything to what I mentioned in my letter. The Sisters are in good health. A wire from Onitsha—Sister M. Joseph, who was suffering from a sharp attack of bilious fever, has completely recovered.

My health has slightly wavered, but I will, I think, be soon as well as ever. I'm not growing young as I fancied I was when under your affectionate care in Killeshandra. All the same, I hope to put in many a long year in Nigeria before the end comes.

God bless and keep you, my dear Mother Xavier, and God watch over the Sisters in Killeshandra and Nigeria.

With all affectionate good wishes,

Yours very sincerely,

JOS. SHANAHAN.

P.S.—Remember me to all the Sisters. I will write soon as now the bulk of the work and worry caused by the unexpected departure of Missioners is over. I find no small difficulty in writing. It fatigues my old head—but that too is only a passing phase.
Onitsha.
1st August 1928.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Herewith several receipts for stipends and Mass intentions received. I forgot to mention how pleased I was to hear of the splendid gift brought to you by the Cabra pupils on behalf of the generous contributors: the students in the Convent. God bless them one and all for their generosity in aid of the poor pagan foreign missions.

Next Wednesday the Sisters in Onitsha enter on Retreat; the same day the Retreat starts in Killleshandra. I have the happiness of being conductor of the first Retreat of the Missionary Sisters in S. Nigeria.

Dr. Heerey is doing exceptionally well, and getting well into the work of the Mission.

You may have heard that Ireland is sending us two priests, while France is sending us three French priests. There is, in addition, Father Patrick O’Connor of Zanzibar. You will recall his lectures some two years ago.

This is all the news for today.

God bless you.

+ Jos. Shanahan.

Onitsha.
20th August 1928.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Mother Aquinas has written to me that at long last your health has given way slightly under the additional strain put on by recent events in S. Nigeria. It has given way only in your flesh, not in your heart and soul.

It is glorious to see our body break down in the service of Jesus Christ. He broke His own sacred body through love of us. We in our turn are honoured by being permitted to suffer something for Him in our poor sinful bodies. God grant that your health may be restored to its original vigour. God needs you for many many years in His vineyard.
You will be pleased to know that the Sisters are happy and well in Onitsha. They are praying hard for you. They were very sorry indeed when they learned that their good, dear Mother was suffering chiefly on their own account.

Hoping that you will be all right by the time this note arrives, and sending you my most affectionate wishes.

I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Catholic Mission, Onitsha.
29th September 1928.

My dear Mother M. Xavier,

Your last letter with all the good news about the arrival of eight new missionary aspirants in Killesandra, and the extension of the Convent in order to cope with the increasing number of missionary novices and Sisters was indeed welcome. I am so happy you are all right once more and able to resume your missionary work for S. Nigeria in the Holy Rosary Convent.

Here in Nigeria all goes well. The Sisters are well and happy. Their new school with its hundreds of children will be in full working order by the end of the second week in October. The five Sisters have just received their First Class Teachers’ Certificates. The Director of Education came in person to visit them. He was ever so pleased with his visit and with the Sisters. Their First Class Certificates will mean considerable financial help to the Convent.

In addition to their own certificates, other certificates have been issued and received today for their staff of Pupil-Teachers. In another year they will have perfected the already considerable experience acquired since their arrival here. In fact, they will be equal to meet any emergency that crops up in our missionary work, i.e., in their particular branch of it.

In your letter you asked me whether it would be necessary to send out two Sisters to Nigeria this year? I believe it is better to keep them back and perfect their already considerable attainments. The five pioneers will be all the better equipped too, to meet them when they come out, and put them rapidly and surely in touch
with missionary work in Nigeria.

You referred also in a very pointed manner to the convent and school in Calabar now directed by Sister M. Magdalen. Our Holy Rosary Sisters will not be asked to live with Sister M. M. in the same convent. So long as Sister M. Magdalen is able to manage affairs in Calabar, she will be left there to herself. When I see she cannot manage any longer her ever-increasing school and boarding school, I will call in our own Sisters to take over, and give Sister M. M. other work to do, but apart from the Sisters. Meanwhile the Sisters will be getting ready to take over this important work in Calabar, and open up besides, new convents in some of our very important centres such as Ihiala, Emekuku, Anua, etc. etc. etc.

Sister Magdalen’s one wish is to remain on in the Mission until called away to heaven. She is ever ready to go anywhere I send her and at a moment’s notice. She certainly knows what obedience is and humility as well. You need have no fear of her causing any trouble anywhere, anytime. I know I could and do make the self-same statement where our own Sisters are concerned.

If Sister M.’s health permits her to remain for the whole of next year, well and good; but if it doesn’t, I will have to send her to England for a rest for a few months. During her absence, her possible absence from Calabar, it is quite evident I will have to call on the Sisters to keep the convent and school going until she returns. At present, there is every reason to believe she will be able to hold out for another year.

Confidential

Before concluding, I must tell you that His Eminence, the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda, has approved of the creation of a society of missionary priests for S. Nigeria. This all-important matter was brought before our Most Holy Father by His Eminence for the Sovereign Pontiff’s approval. And our Holy Father has approved of the proposal thus brought before him by His Eminence Cardinal Van Rossum.

This it was that has been worrying me more than anything ever worried me in a life that has known not a few worries. My mind was centred on this one object to the exclusion of all others. You see at a glance what it means for me at this time in my life. Now
that God wills it to be undertaken it is for me to start once again to do whatever little God wants me to do in order to co-operate with Him in creating another missionary family.

You understand now that the poor Sisters were nothing in what seemed to be the cause of my troubles. I was in myself the cause of all my trouble.

There is room in S. Nigeria for thousands of priests. This new Society in Ireland will endeavour to get a good supply of Irish priests for a mission where a good knowledge of English is essential. Therefore, foreign missionaries will henceforth be but of little use because the whole mission work rests on schools.

It is true we are getting seven new priests this year! but we have lost already four! who have left us for good. Four of these who are coming are foreigners without any knowledge of English. So, you will see our apparent big number of new men is more apparent than real—only three of an increase!

It is said there is a good place going near Belturbet. If so, we might look for it. Perhaps Killeshandra would not lose by having the new Society—no matter how small it may be to start with—near it. Chaplains, etc. could be easily supplied and lectures given for the common cause, where both Societies would be equally interested.

You are now in possession of my one and only secret! And it may be no secret for you. Will the new Society mean that my interest in Killeshandra will be in any way lessened? No. Quite the contrary. I will be better able to help you, when the Society is started, than at any time before.

As far as I can judge, the Holy Ghost Fathers will not be long in Killeshandra. I had orders from the Superior General to recall Father Mellett. The Bishop intervened; but how long will this state of affairs last? All is in the hands of God. More than ever, I ask you and all the Sisters for incessant prayers. God alone knows how badly I need them.

With all affectionate good wishes,
I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely in Christ,

+Jos. Shanahan.

P.S.—I need hardly tell you that Dr. Heerey is one with me in
all I have undertaken. I have not yet written to Dr. Finegan, but will do so very soon. You may mention this to Mother Aquinas, and the Rev. Mother Prioress General. Dr. Leen knows all about this from me.

J. S.
With the Sign of the Cross

(1928-1930)

Bishop Shanahan’s letters give us an insight into the greatest of human mysteries—Suffering. There is scarcely one of his letters which does not refer to it in one form or another.

For the Bishop human suffering can never be divorced from the redemptive sufferings of Christ and thus it is central in the life of the missionary, placing Christ in the very centre of our being so that we may be perfect instruments in His hands for the sake of souls.

I will never ask God to take suffering away from you that would be against your vocation as apostles sharing in Christ’s apostolate of Redemption through the Cross, through anguish of mind and heart, of soul and body.

For Christ will continue to be crucified in us and we in Him till the last soul is saved.

In these letters to Mother Xavier expressing sympathy with the Sisters in the initial difficulties in adjusting to their life in Nigeria, the Bishop shows a gentleness and sensitivity that is almost maternal as he expresses his views on the life-giving power of suffering accepted for others—his grasp of the union of all men in Christ and his awareness of sin and the slow, uphill work that conversion to Christ will mean for many.

The missionaries will have to take on their shoulders a large share of the life-giving penance that their
spiritual children are unable to perform. In return God grants pardon and grace and life . . .

But it means suffering. This will explain why the Sisters like all Christ’s special friends have to suffer so much.

Catholic Mission, Onitsha. 15th November 1928.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Many thanks for your letter and the “Form of Proposed Agreement” that accompanied it with a cheque for £15.0.7 for 56 Mass intentions. Later on when I get the Council of the Vicariate together the Agreement will be officially considered for final acceptance on both sides. I return herewith the receipt for £15.0.7. You will have received my letter written some time ago.

Today I wish first of all to tell you how happy I am to know you have received so many new postulants and that you even expect three more at Christmas! God is good in providing us with such an abundant supply of aspirant missionary Sisters. You may be certain that since He has sent you the vocations He will also provide all that’s necessary for their maintenance including the new wing for the novitiate. I’m sorry that the October appeal has been disappointing. All the more reason to trust in our Blessed Lady and St. Joseph. The Missionary Sisters have never yet failed to obtain the granting of their petitions through Mary and Joseph. They will obtain the means necessary for the new wing to the Convent.

It is quite evident from your letter that you are very anxious about the Sisters in Nigeria, your Mother’s heart cannot find rest until you are perfectly assured that all is well in the Holy Rosary Convent, Onitsha. All is well, thank God in spite of recurring little difficulties that are inevitable in all beginnings but more so in the beginning of a new Society’s missionary life in one of the most trying climates Europeans have ever lived in. You must not be upset because of the
many crosses sent to those beautiful souls to purify and strengthen them ever more and more. The love of the cross goes hand in hand with the love of Christ. Both are essential to the formation of Christ’s missionaries.

The Sisters are accepting with heroic generosity the heavy crosses that have been with them ever since they landed in Nigeria. There is no murmur, no complaint, no despondency, but there is perfect faith and hope and love in their hearts and they are happy because like the apostles they are thought worthy to suffer something for Christ in order to repair and expiate in union with Him and His Blessed Mother the outrages inflicted on Him by His poor weak children in Nigeria.

The Missioners will ever have to take on their own shoulders a large share of the life-giving penance that their spiritual children are unable to perform. In return God grants pardon and grace and life to their children. There is nothing to express the happiness one feels at seeing a poor, poor soul return from death to life. But it means suffering. This will explain why the Sisters like all Christ’s special friends have to suffer so much. I know you will take this—the only true view of the difficulties they have experienced since their arrival here. In a year or two what seems to them and to you extraordinary difficulties will seem in reality very small. But for the time being their difficulties—especially the difficulty of getting acclimatised to this torrid temperature—are very real and exceptionally trying—entailing considerable suffering.

Poor Mother Dominic has now spent almost five weeks in bed. Any effort she made to get up resulted in collapse. She is a model patient and a very apt pupil in Our Lord’s school of suffering. Great graces will be and are being granted to her and to the Mission as a whole on account of her generous acceptance of this heavy cross. The doctor, who is very kind, says she will be alright but it will take time. She has got a rheumatic heart. This climate, strange to say, agrees with this particular trouble and is not therefore its cause. Mother will be alright shortly.

The heat is at its worst just now. No matter, her patience is unaltered. She is very happy and not one bit frightened. Few of the veterans that I know would be in any way approachable after a couple of weeks of this ailment—this climate—and in bed!

Poor S. M. G. is down again, and in pain, at the other end of the
corridor. She too is suffering with exceptional generosity. Sr. M. P. is at her best. She is keeping the big school going, while Sr. M. B. does the nursing and Sr. M. J. the cooking. It is an admirable example of adaptation to exceptionally trying circumstances. The Convent life goes on as usual.

For some time past I have set my portable altar on the verandah so that Mother can assist at Mass and receive Holy Communion. This is necessary for her. It is a great privilege bestowed on her by Our Lord who comes with His whole heavenly court to visit His spouse each morning and take her to His own Sacred Heart. It is for me a privilege to be able to witness this meeting of Christ with a soul He loves. The Sisters assist on the verandah at Mass until such time as the bell calls them away to their duties.

I have absolute confidence in the Sisters. They are behaving admirably under the stress of battle because they fight under the eyes of Our Lord. Do not be surprised if one or other of the Sisters may have to return to Europe for a while. There is nothing unusual in this. We must be ready to accept God's will in this as in all other things.

The year that is now ending has been the hardest year of my missionary life. Had not the Sisters been here to pray for us and take on their own shoulders the part of suffering that was our just due I don't know what would have happened. But God arranged everything as He ever does in spite of the efforts of the evil one to crush us while we were at our weakest.

Now the new Missioners have come in answer to the prayers of the Sisters in Killeshandra, and today the old veterans are landing in Nigeria full of new life for the continuance of the conflict—so all is well. How good God is!

The mission is still well on its legs. Our training college is started. The sacred returns are good as ever they were. We have had no death to deplore. By Christmas the Sisters will be all well and ready to celebrate their first Christmas in Nigeria. We have two visitors from Paris landing in Calabar at the end of this month. I will have to spend the next five weeks with them and most of my time away from Onitsha. But Dr. Heerey will be here so that my absence makes no difference whatsoever.

The news you sent me about the great number of new postulants raised my hopes higher than ever they have been. God is with us.
Nothing else matters. You will find all you need for your ever increasing religious family and also for the construction of that new wing that you are contemplating.

Confidential

As regards my health I am well. But I was unable to do any office work during the year; that was a source of great suffering. I had to do the essential. I am better now and feel that in time I will be able to manage to make ends meet.

Don’t be upset about my silence. Rather than write with a tired brain I remained silent. I have lost many friends over it... I can’t help it. This is enough about my old self. I will, in all probability have to go home next year (1929). I won’t go until all is in shipshape here. When I get home again we will be able to talk matters over and in a few hours bridge over those last twelve months of silence.

Fr. Ronayne is returning to Nigeria a new man and a happy one. I’m very glad to have him back. I want a priest of his tried holiness in some of our stations that have been particularly tried during the last few years.

Won’t you be so good as to tell the Sisters how grateful I am for their letters so full of the Spirit of Christ and of His Blessed Mother.

With all affectionate good wishes I remain, my dear Mother Xavier—with sentiments of deep gratitude for all your sacrifices and all your great work done for Christ and for His cause in Nigeria.

Yours very sincerely in Christ,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Onitsha.
19th November 1928

My dear Mother M. Xavier,

A hurried line to tell you that Mother M. Dominic is getting on remarkably well. Her splendid constitution and determined will to resist physical suffering by perfect submission to God’s holy will and by seeing in her sufferings a special expression of His love for
her has enabled her to get the upper hand of what threatened at one time to be a very serious illness. She is now beginning her sixth week in bed but seems as happy as if she had never been ill. Fortunately the long looked for change in the weather—the dry harmattan wind is just beginning to blow. This means the end of all danger from the climate point of view. By Christmas she will be alright again and at her work.

Sister M. Gerard is much better and well on the right side. You must not be upset at home by these inevitable sufferings that all new and young Missioners have to face. In a couple of years the Sisters will not be subject to them any longer. The fact of living in this climate for the first couple of years is in itself hard work.

The Missioners who went home for a rest are now back again. This means great relief for all of us. Father Davey is to return after Christmas.

The Sisters’ School is kept going—Sr. M. P. continues to be equal to the occasion.

You may have more than ever the fullest confidence in your five religious daughters. They need cheerful letters from home. We will leave nothing undone that may restore them to perfect health. More than ever prayers are requested.

Kindest and most affectionate regards to all the Sisters and to Mother Aquinas and to you my dear Mother Xavier, the gratitude and affection of

Yours very sincerely in Xto.,

Jos. Shanahan

P.S.—I am leaving this week for Calabar. I should have gone before now but I could not do so leaving the poor Sisters ill here in Onitsha. I am happy and getting back my health. I think Mother Dominic has got this for me at the expense of her own health!

Sr. M. B. continues to be a splendid and efficient acting superior and nurse. Had she not been here, the situation might have been very, very grave indeed. But God arranges everything as He alone ever does for His children.
My dear Mother M. Xavier,

A few hurried lines to thank you for your letter of 19th November to which was attached a copy of Rt. Rev. Bishop Le Hunsec's very kind letter to you on the occasion of his visit to Killeshandra. It is quite evident His Lordship was deeply impressed by what he saw of the splendid religious and missionary spirit of our Irish Missionary Sisters.

Your letter contained exceptionally cheerful news viz.: the promise of three Sisters for Nigeria early in 1929. The Sisters here were overjoyed to know you were sending them such generous help. I requested the acting Mother Superior, Sister M. Brigid, to consult Mother Dominic on the advisability of cabling home so that the Sisters might begin their preparation for the journey to Nigeria. They consulted and told me they were of opinion that a cable be sent immediately. They gave me the names of the Sisters mentioned in the letter to them and I cabled as follows: "Get Sister Ag(nes) Phil(omena) Ca(therine) ready. Writing". To avoid publicity the names were not cabled in full.

Mother Dominic and Sister M. Brigid mentioned at the same time that they were most anxious that the three Sisters be accompanied by one of their beloved Mothers in religion, either your own good self or Mother Aquinas. They (the Sisters here) are convinced of the necessity of this step. A few months spent here would enable you to acquire valuable personal experience of the conditions in tropical Africa under which the Missionary Sisters will have to live and work and sanctify themselves while making every effort at the same time, to teach others by word and example to live and work and save their souls.

I am in full agreement with the wish expressed by the Sisters. Your presence in Nigeria, even for a few months only, will render invaluable service to the Sisters and the Mission. During your stay here you will get a good grasp of the missionary side of the life of the new Society. And since the chief end and purpose of the Society is missionary work in pagan Africa, great attention must be given to this particular end and to the means of achieving it.

Whatever Mother Dominic's experience of missionary life in
Africa may be, her opinions and views will not count for much. She is only a novice as yet—unless she has with her the opinions and views of one of her Mothers based on practical experience of missionary life known and lived here in Africa.

I hope you will come in spite of the many difficulties that lie in the way. I know there is no small danger from the point of view of health in this climate even for a short stay. There will be difficulties at home in finding somebody to fill the place of the Mother that travels to Nigeria. The Rev. Mother Prioress and her council will have to be approached with a view to granting the necessary permission to travel this far, etc. etc. I am writing, on my side, to her placing the whole matter before her and asking for her kind consent. I am writing also to Father Davey in Belfast who is to sail for Nigeria in January; to cancel his voyage and wait over until such time as the Sisters are coming.

Meanwhile there will be no change made here in Nigeria. Mother Dominic who has made a splendid recovery insists on this. Sister M. Brigid is of her opinion. There is no immediate need for M. Dominic’s return to Europe. She can wait on here until you arrive with the Sisters. When you have spent a few months in the mission she can return with you to Ireland.

Sister M. Gerard is ordered home by the doctor, but her case is not so serious that she may not remain over for some time longer. She may even recover altogether. In case she has to go then she will go and Sr. M. Patrick will accompany her. But all would prefer to wait until you arrive with the new Sisters.

It is of vital importance that to the outside world no signs of weakness appear in the ranks of our Missionary Sisters. After twelve months it is quite understandable that a Sister or two may have to go home for reasons of health. This is a very common occurrence in this country.

There is little or no fear of any unpleasantness being caused by the delay. Mother Dominic is her old strong, cheerful, decided self, even though she is weak and worn by so many troubles and worries coupled with a protracted illness. She has overcome all and is and will be all the better for her hard trial. Suffering adds a dash of tenderness to stern authority.

Sister M. Brigid has been the mainstay of the community both as nurse and as acting Mother Superior during these trying months
of M. D.’s illness and of Sister M. Gerard’s. Although suffering herself she remained at her post without flinching. Her former experience of Nigeria, her knowledge of nursing, her fund of great common sense and humour combined with her determination to save the situation at all costs, have enabled her to steer the little community over an extremely dangerous passage. All is well now. The two invalids are leaving the hospital tomorrow.

Today I offered up the Holy Sacrifice in grateful thanksgiving for Our Lord’s goodness to our suffering Sisters. Our Lady on this day of the octave of her Immaculate Conception received also the very special thanks of clients and children in Nigeria. She has been so good to us.

With all affectionate good wishes and hoping to have good news from you in a few weeks.

I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Calabar. 1928.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Herewith a general letter written in a desperate hurry for the Sisters. It means little beyond recalling what the spirit of a Missioner ought to be. I have not had time to read it over. Will you see that the most glaring mistakes of spelling or grammar are corrected.

I have also written a note to each Sister with a view to keeping in personal touch with each and all and let them know that my affection as a Father—for all—is unaltered and unalterable.

God bless you and all in Killeshandra. All good wishes once again for a very happy Christmas. All are very well here. The Sisters are very well now except Sister M. Gerard who will be all right in a few days.

Yours very sincerely,

Jos. Shanahan.
My dear Mother Xavier,

I cabled to you just now: “Patients greatly improved send Christmas greetings.” I know it will add considerably to your happiness and to that of poor Mother Aquinas and of the Sisters. At long last, although there were very, very weak and worn—we got them away from the hospital and sent them on to one of our Rest Houses in the bush, 90 miles away. Father Th. O’Connor with the Fathers in Owerri will see that they have Mass each morning. They will have besides all the comforts we can give them. Sister M. Brigid is with them to look after their bodily comforts. Already they are ever so much improved.

Had their rule permitted them to do, while in health, what they are now compelled to do by illness we would have been spared much of the great anxiety that has affected us all—you at home not less than us out here. It does not matter now, since they are, thank God, recovering. Practical experience of missionary life and its hardships and inevitable demands where life is concerned, will enable the Sisters, little by little, to differentiate between essentials and non-essentials in matters that concern their life and usefulness as Missioners. God is good in sending us this wonderful Christmas gift: the recovery of the health of our poor Missioners.

More than ever they and we, with them, thank God with renewed gratitude. We love him more than ever and are especially thankful for the graces he has so profusely poured out over us all during the very trying days of 1928. But you have suffered far more at home than we have out here. In return for your generosity under the Hand of God look at all the postulants He has sent you for us.

They and the novices have written to me most beautiful letters all full of intense love for God’s honour and the salvation of poor Africa. I have written to each one of them. In future I will not fail to keep up correspondence with them. I see now how much I have pained you and them by breaking off all correspondence. I fear I did it through sheer sloth—and I gained nothing by it! On the contrary, my health grew worse. Now that I have got back to the old spirit and the old affection I ever had for you and all in Killeshandra I feel as I used to feel when spending a day with you in far distant old
Ireland. You may tell the Sisters, novices and postulants to write
to me whenever they like and as often as they like. I love to get their
letters—and I will answer them. It will make me make an effort
which I know now I've got to make continually if I am to retain
health of body and mind. Tell them also to write to the Sisters, to
them of course, first of all.

I received your Xmas letter and read it with a heart full of
gratitude for all you do and suffer for love of God and for love of
each one of us. I would like to make you some return for all this.
I fear I cannot do anything like what I would wish to do. But there
is one thing I would ask you to believe and it is that my affection
for you—an affection I know that comes from God and that God
insists on my having for His friends whom He has given me to
be my friends—even sharing with me this most previous gift—is
now as sincere and earnest as it was and has ever been since first I
met you and knew you in Killeshandra.

During the hours of strife this may not appear on the surface but
it is always there even when you disagree with me absolutely as you
do in the matter of the Missionary Society for Priests being set up.
(I will write about this later on.) God bless you and watch over you
and Killeshandra. May His peace and fortitude fill your heart with
joy and strength to continue the good fight for His dear sake.

I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours affectionately and sincerely,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Onitsha.
5th May 1929.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Only a line to give you the great good news of the safe arrival in
Onitsha of our three Missionary Sisters. Mother M. Dominic with
Sister M. Brigid motored to Port Harcourt to meet them. I accom-
panied them. On Friday evening at 4 p.m. in the midst of a terrific
thunderstorm, the ABINSI anchored alongside the landing stage
at Port Harcourt. A few minutes later the Sisters from Onitsha were
greeting their Sisters from Killeshandra. Theirs was a happiness, a
peace and joy that came from heaven not from earth. I could not
describe the beauty of that little scene where Ireland and Africa met in the persons of the Holy Rosary Missionary Sisters. No words could depict their happiness. The following morning the Sisters motored all the way to Onitsha—some 170 miles away—and got in at dusk.

Today was their first Sunday in their new home in Africa. They came over to call on me a few minutes ago. It was Killeshandra all over once again—the Killeshandra I love to think of. I felt as I used to feel during those happy walks we used sometimes take over the fields in Killeshandra. All are cor unum et anima una in the most beautiful meaning of the phrase.

Today marks the beginning of the Sisters’ advance as a missionary force. The last year has been a year of desperate preparation for this advance. Now all is ready. My thoughts go back by instinct to you and to Mother Aquinas and to Cabra. God bless you a hundred times over for all you have done to send to Nigeria Missioners who are more like angels than men. Their personal holiness with their perfect religious life and ardent apostolic zeal will bring untold blessings on Nigeria. I am happier than I have been for many many months—I might say even years. I will write by next week to the Sisters in Killeshandra.

I remain, my dear Mother Xavier, with all affectionate good wishes,

Yours very sincerely,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Catholic Mission, Onitsha, S. Nigeria.
5th July 1929.

My dear Mother Xavier,

A hurried line to acknowledge your welcome letters of May and June with the Mass intentions. I have received also letters from the postulants, novices and Sisters. They are one and all the expression of perfect happiness and most earnest desires for nothing short of real saintliness. God be blessed for all these exceptional graces.

I congratulate you on the great success you are making of the new building. Soon you will have room for another group of postulants. I am sending along my blessing to the novices-elect.
God bless them and you and all in Killosandra a thousand times over.

Here in Onitsha there is perfect harmony and happiness in the Holy Rosary Convent. After the cross the peace of heaven! That’s great news you sent me about Dr. Finegan’s visit to the Convent and his appreciation of the work that is being done to form missionary saints and scholars.

The hospital mentioned by Mother Dominic is not a government but a mission hospital-to-be. For the present, there is no need to worry about it. But in the near future its urgency will be up for earnest consideration. Just now the school dominates everything. That must be made a success of—and Mother Dominic and the Sisters are on the high road to make the Catholic “Immaculata School” the best in all Nigeria.

Mother Dominic is getting back all her strength. For a time she was rather weak.

Excuse this very hasty note. All goes well in Nigeria. God bless you and all in the House on the Hill.

With all affectionate good wishes,

Yours very sincerely,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

P.S.—Mother Dominic has permitted Sister M. Philomena to give me a helping hand at the office work. This is a Godsend for which I’m very grateful. Sister M. Gerard was my “right hand man” for that work. She writes that she hopes to be soon ready for Nigeria. That’s a wonderful recovery.

J. S.

Onitsha.
18th July 1929.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Today I cabled you that poor Mother Dominic has got to go home as soon as she is able to travel. This by order of the doctor and he is extremely kind and friendly to the Sisters and the Mission in general.

On Sunday the 7th July, Mother got a very severe fit. She was so
bad that for sometime her life was almost despained of. She received
Extreme Unction and thought the last hour had come for her.
Quite willingly and lovingly she gave back her soul to God, happy
that she was to die as a missionary in Africa. I was not at home,
but Dr. Heerey was, and it was he who gave the last sacraments to
poor Mother Dominic.

On my return, late on Sunday night, I got an awful shock when
I learned from Dr. Heerey the happenings of the day. And yet I
could not but rejoice in the midst of this great cloud of sorrow at the
first offering of the Missionary Society of Our Lady of the Holy
Rosary of the greatest gift that could be given: the free and loving
offering by Mother Dominic of her own life to Our Lord for the
conversion of His poor African children.

In her person the whole Society offered its life to Jesus Christ.
And, while I feel convinced that the offering, like Abraham’s, was
most acceptable and certainly accepted, yet, God gave back the life
thus offered to Him at the gates of heaven, a life henceforth doubly
consecrated. Mother Dominic was not only ready but extremely
happy to go away from this earth: already she saw visions of heaven
and all its glory and beauty and peace and eternal joy . . . But
Holy Providence sent her back to earth to continue her labours
for the sacred cause of Jesus Christ in Africa. Somewhat reluctantly
she returned to consciousness. Around her were gathered her five
Sisters who, with the Bishop, prayed alongside of her. She was
undergoing intense physical suffering all this time. Her recovery
began immediately after the last unction of the holy oils.

She is now more determined than ever to live and work and die
with unceasing zeal and love and confidence in God. She says she
can never thank God sufficiently for the great grace he has bestowed
on her in making her realise the absolute nothingness of this world
without divine grace and God’s holy friendship and sustaining power.

Bishop Heerey had to go to Anua two days later to continue the
confirmations begun many weeks previously.

I began with Mother and the Sisters a novena of Masses to the
Holy Ghost. The novena ended yesterday. Mother has made a
wonderful recovery. We all asked and begged and prayed that if it
were God’s holy will that Mother should remain on with us He
would grant us this great favour, but, if it were His holy will that
she should go, already at this early hour in her life, to receive her
great reward: His own divine self in heaven, we would accept with
perfect resignation, His holy will.

Meanwhile the doctor came and after careful examination said
that unless Mother left Africa immediately for a good rest at home
her life would be in great danger. He also said that she should have
gone home last October, 1928, but that in deference to her own oft
repeated desire to remain at her post at all costs, for God needed
her there regardless of the consequences to her health, he, the
doctor, had respected this heroic resolve of a great soul. He was
struck with admiration for the power that could so inspire a human
heart to sacrifice its very existence for a few poor black girls and
women and children in Africa!

As a matter of fact, Mother's health never did come back to
normal since the first breakdown in October or rather the final
break in October. We could all see her failing, and yet she never
once showed, never owned up to it. She knew it was essential for the
society and its work in Africa with its existence at home that she
should remain on until the cause of all the trouble was removed
and the new Sisters well installed and introduced to their work in
Onitsha.

Then also she wanted to see the new Convent-School buildings:
boarders' quarters, training college, elementary school buildings, etc.
completed. All this is now done, and well done, under her careful
direction and inspiration. Everything is going on splendidly. There
is every chance of having the new Normal class with the new build-
ings erected for that purpose, recognised as the first Girls' Training
College in S. Nigeria. Only yesterday the three new Sisters got their
first class certificates from the Education dept.

God sustained her through all; sustained her and her equally
brave fellow-missionary Sisters, for they too were no less heroic in
their will to die at their post rather than surrender even though
Mother should die.

The work can now be carried on without Mother's presence for
at least a good six or eight months. A rest, a good rest, mental and
physical, is all she needs to be better than ever she has been in
her physical health and energy. The doctor has assured us that she
is perfectly fit for work in Nigeria, all that is necessary is to get rid
of the effects of the overstrain caused by the first year's excessive
work in Africa. This is most consoling for you, Mother, for all
in Killeshandra, for Mother Dominic herself and finally for all of us here in Nigeria. She will need the care of a good doctor for some time. There may be a doubt about possible or probable trouble from appendicitis, etc. All this is to explain that Mother is going home and why . . .

There's nobody to go home with her unless we send back one of the new Sisters, that, we thought, would never do. Nor can we spare a Father. We have reached the breaking point in that direction. Under the circumstances I decided that I would travel with Mother. I was to have gone home this year but had decided not to, on account of the visit of the Apostolic Visitor from Rome: but he writes that he won't be able to get around here before next year. Then there is a most vital matter concerning the interests of Nigeria: the matter of personnel, to be seen to at once if Nigeria is to continue to hold its own against the ever-increasing number of Protestant missioners. This I cannot do except I am at home. Writing from 5,000 miles away produces very little effect. And misunderstandings are the order of the day in matters of this nature.

Much as I dislike the idea from a mere personal and natural point of view: yet for Mother's sake and for the sake of the Sisters here and in Killeshandra, for your sake too my dear Mother Xavier and for Mother Aquinas' sake, I am going home and very gladly too! We need to meet again and take counsel after these two first years of our Sisters' missionary life and experience in Nigeria.

They have realised in every way the very high expectations of all here in Nigeria. I want to go home to tell you all about them—want to encourage the new Sisters. They might fear there's something desperately hard in the Missioners' life in Nigeria. I feel and know that even that would be an additional incentive to their zeal. Yet I want to assure them that it is not so. Nigeria is among the first missions in Africa or, even for that matter, in any part of the pagan mission field.

In a few months I will see you again in the House on the Hill. A fortnight ago it was the thought furthest from my mind! And I am delighted that God has arranged for me to go. Dr. Heerey will get a valuable opportunity of directing the mission over which he will soon be sole ruler. It is a most useful experience for him.

Everything is settling down to normal. We are well over the difficulties of two years ago. Our training college is well started. So
there won’t be any exceptional situation to face during my absence. We sail from Port Harcourt on or about the 20th or 21st of August, and hope to get to Liverpool between 15th and 20th of Sept. If you have any instructions will you send them on to us. I intend going right on to Killeshandra with Mother, my first visit must be for you. In this way I hope to make up for that delayed visit of 1926! How different things are today! How visibly God has blessed you; your work; the Sisters; the Mission of S. Nigeria; Cabra; Dr. Leen, all our friends.

I know you will find this letter even more disjointed than any of the others I have written but also I know your good heart will join it all up and see in it an attempt to express my deep gratitude to God first of all, and, then, after Him, to you and Mother Aquinas and to the Sisters and also to good Father Mellett, Father O’Sullivan, Dr. Leen and Cabra, not forgetting dear Dr. Finegan. The new Society is sealed with the sign of the cross—a sure guarantee that God loves it.

The happiness of meeting you all again makes me feel ten years younger.

The Sisters in Onitsha continue to be the happiest community I know of—always excepting Killeshandra and Cabra. They are glad to see Mother go home for a rest. They know she will be back soon with Sister M. Gerard and some new Sisters perhaps. The new Convent in Owerri will be ready for the Sisters by December this year. All are well.

God bless you and all in Killeshandra.
With all affectionate good wishes,
I am, my dear Mother Xavier,
Yours v. gratefully and sincerely,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Calabar.
30th July 1929.

My dear Mother Xavier,

A cable came here last night from Bishop Hinsley, Apostolic Visitor, announcing his arrival here in August to visit the Mission! This upsets all my arrangements for going home. I don’t know what we will do to get Mother Dominic home. Our passages were booked
for the ABINSI.

I will cable later on when I get back to Onitsha. Meanwhile, the official Visitator of the Congregation arrived yesterday, with the Prefect Apostolic of the Cameroons! So my hands are full—all our Visitors and Visitators will have gone back before Christmas.

I’m sorry, but Providence arranges what is ever best for each and all of us—so God’s holy will be done. The Mission will benefit by the Apostolic Visitor’s visit.

Later on more news. God bless you and all in Killeshandra.

All affectionate good wishes with my blessing upon you and all,

Yours ever sincerely,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Onitsha.
17th August 1929.

My dear Mother Xavier,

A few hurried lines to tell you that Mother Dominic is sailing on the ABINSI on the date already arranged: the 29th inst. The state of her health necessitates her leaving immediately for a rest, the result of which will be her restoration to sound health. Unaccustomed as you are at home in Ireland to those sudden collapses in physical health caused by exceptional strain put on newcomers to the tropics, you may feel somewhat disheartened. Don’t for a moment allow any such depressing ideas to get a hold over you. The Sisters are experiencing what every newcomer experiences on his or her first arrival in these regions. Mother Dominic had the additional strain that you know of, added to the climate.

Of the first eight Sisters that went to the Cameroons, only one remains today, all the others had to go home for a rest, but of course to return and now, after some three or four years they are getting on very well.

I am sorry I am not going along with Mother Dominic but then, this cannot be helped. Mgr. Hinsley is now in the Cameroons and may be here any day. When his Visitation is ended I will sail for Europe.

You need have no fear for Mother Dominic’s being alone on the ABINSI. There are Catholic stewardesses I understand. And besides,
the Sisters and Fathers are so well known, esteemed and respected that she will be as safe there almost as if she were in the Old country. The other five Sisters are very well and happy. Their annual retreat ended on the 15th, the beautiful festival of the Assumption of Our Lady. All of us were associated with you all in Killeshandra on that great day when the ten new novices received the holy habit of religion, and when the newly professed Sister made her vows.

The ecclesiastical year's work ended on the 31st July. The Sacred Returns show that in spite of all our difficulties God's blessing continues to work wonders of grace among our poor Nigerians. I attribute this happy state of affairs to the prayers, holy lives and missionary zeal of our Holy Rosary Sisters at home and in Nigeria.

It was a delightful surprise for me to hear that the new wing at Killeshandra will be finished by the end of this year and that you expect ten new postulants in September. So that as the space increases so does the number of vocations.

You have met so many Nigerian Missioners that there is no need for me to refer to what is already known to you in connection with our work here. The Sisters' new house at Emekuku is nearing completion. Five new English missionary priests are sent to us this year. There is not one from Ireland. Later on we will probably have a supply of German priests. It does not matter where priests come from. All are holders of the one Priesthood of Christ. The coming of so many priests is a direct answer to the prayers of the Sisters.

I wish all the Visitations were over. We have had our share of them during the past twelve months. Dr. Heerey is very well. You hear from him, of course, so there's no need for me to tell you all he is doing for Christ and souls in Nigeria.

With all good wishes and sending you, Mother Aquinas, and the Sisters a very special blessing.

I remain, my dear Mother M. Xavier,

Yours very sincerely in Xto.,

+ Jos. Shanahan.

P.S.—Many thanks for the Mass Intentions.
Blackrock College, Dublin.
1st April 1930.

My dear Mother Xavier,
   Congratulations! The new wing has been handed over to you in record time. It is a grand Easter gift Our Lord is sending for your spiritual daughters.
   It will give me great pleasure to be with you for Easter. Do you intend to have Pontifical High Mass? If so will you let me know.
   I'm glad to hear Mother Dominic is all right. Sister M. Therese wrote that things are not at all as bad as I had thought. She will do well as Assistant Mistress of Novices. You have made a good choice.
   With all kind good wishes,
   I remain, my dear Mother Xavier,
       Yours very sincerely,

   +Jos. Shanahan.

Great Southern Hotel, Mallaranny.
2nd September 1930.

Dear Mother Xavier,
   I reached Foxford safely at 8 p.m. My venerable friend Mother Arsenius in her 89th year, was glad to see me, and I was just as glad to see her once more in this world. She lives for Nigeria! Indeed all the Sisters take the keenest interest in the Mission. On Friday I came to Mallaranny late at night. The roads were bad and the night dark. It was a wonderful experience for a novice motor-driver. On my way I came up with a poor woman who was in terror of having to face all the ghosts and fairies that seem to be particularly interested in lonely wayfarers on dark nights in those remote parts of Galway—I gave her a lift. Her prayers are promised to me for the rest of her days, and of mine too.
   At Mallaranny I found my sister and May most anxious as to whether I'd ever reach the hotel.
   Today, Monday, I'm leaving for Galway, Athenry, Loughrea—thence on by Mullingar to Dublin. I'm in the very best form and am quite at home with the car. Yesterday we went for a drive by Newport, Foxford, Ballina, Crossmolina, Bangor Erris and down by
Clew Bay to Achill and Mallaranny. The Wild West bathed in golden sunshine looked beautiful—but its wild beauty is all its own. I don’t know any other country that has scenery like that. I can never forget it.

I called in for a few minutes to see Sister M. Xavier’s dear mother and sisters at Ballina. No welcome could be warmer. Of course I arrived unannounced. I promised to call again if at all possible. There are one or two if not three excellent possible Missionary Sisters in Sister M. Xavier’s home. Her mother will not forget those very happy days spent in Killeshandra. Her daughter’s happiness has made her forget much of her own great sorrow.

I could not get to Tubbercurry to see the Marist Sisters. And yet I should have loved to see them and tell them all about Sr. M. Francis—It will be for later on—

With affectionate good wishes to you, Mother Aquinas, Mother Dominic, Sister Therese and all the Sisters.

I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.
Choose a Coadjutor

(1927)

I am grown old and useless as an old Ford. There can be no question of renovation.

During 1927 Bishop Shanahan’s state of health had deteriorated considerably. His sight had become so poor he prepared for total blindness. He considered it his duty to tender his resignation to the Holy See and he did so. The Pope questioned him closely.

I told him that it was the desire of my life to be a missionary in Africa and to be on active service all the days of my life.

The Holy Father expressed the view that the mission still needed the man who had organised it.

Return to Nigeria even if your eyes are no longer of use. Choose a co-adjutor of your own choice to work under your direction . . .

In February 1927 the Holy See gave him a co-adjutor in the person of Father Charles Heerey, C.S.Sp., then 35 years old. He was consecrated in the chapel of Holy Rosary Convent, Killeshandra on May 29th. Later he became Archbishop of Onitsha and was destined to consolidate and amplify the heritage that fell to him—particularly in the fields of education and in the Bigard Seminary at Enugu.

96 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin.
2nd February 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,
You will have heard of the news of the appointment of the
Co-adjutor Bishop of S. Nigeria. Father Heerey will be an excellent bishop who will carry on the work of the Mission in the spirit in which all those interested in Nigeria would wish it to be done. He is to sail for Ireland on account of the poor state of his health caused by overwork. It is a pity he could not be consecrated in Nigeria. But since a cable had come announcing his departure from Nigeria even before he knew of his appointment, there is evidently an arrangement made by Holy Providence necessitating his consecration here at home.

It is remarkable that a Co. Cavan priest should be elected.

Will you please tell Mother Aquinas and the novices about the new bishop. I am certainly very happy to have Dr. Heerey for co-adjutor, not for my own sake, but in a special manner, for the sake of the new Sisterhood in which he will take as much interest as I do.

I hope you and Mother Aquinas and all the Sisters are very well and that the work in the new chapel is going on to your satisfaction. My treatment here will be finished Monday next. I feel much better in my joints.

God bless you and in His name I bless you with the Sisters.

I am, my dear Rev. Mother Xavier,

Yours very sincerely,

+Jos. Shanahan.

P.S.—I was and am waiting still for a letter from Rome, confirming the wire I received about Dr. Heerey’s nomination.

J. S.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
Monday, 28th March 1927.

My dear Mother Xavier,

Dr. Heerey and myself will call on Wednesday next at Killeshandra. We hope to leave Dublin by the 9 o’c train. Would you be so good as to arrange for a night’s lodging in the “Lodge”.

Get the Sisters to say an extra prayer that the consecration may
take place in the Convent chapel. Nothing settled so far.

God bless you. With all kind wishes to the Sisters.

I am, my dear Mother Xavier,

Very sincerely yours in Xto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp

Blackrock College, Dublin.
24th May 1927.

My dear Rev. Mother Xavier,

I am in receipt of the £100 cheque I sent you to enable you to meet some of the expenses you have to face in connection with Dr. Heerey’s consecration. In your goodness of heart you refuse help of a financial nature because you wish the convent to give this additional gift to Nigeria in the person of its Co-adjutor Bishop. God bless you and the Sisters for all you have undertaken to make everybody happy on consecration day.

I knew you wouldn’t like the crosses. It is evident that the only satisfactory way of securing suitable crosses is to get them made to order, according to the special design chosen by the Convent.

I was over in St. Mary’s, Cabra on Sunday evening for the crowning of the Queen of Queens. It was a most interesting ceremony because it was an outward expression of the intensely apostolic spirit of the Convent students. There were several Queens, but it was the “Queen of the Missions” secured the highest number of votes. I must say I didn’t feel quite at home at the Coronation ceremony; the first I’ve ever had the honour of performing! I was struck with the delightful spirit of the proceedings. There was enthusiasm with evident sincerity and deep faith underlying and giving life and tone to the homely, queenly proceedings. The spirit of sacrifice shone brightly in the eyes of these young girls who had given every farthing they had for the Killeshandra Missionary Convent and Nigeria, for the sake of Our Lord and the souls He loved unto death.

After the ceremony I was asked to “say a few words” on the Mission. I repeated for the Nth time the few rambling remarks that are known by heart now so often have I repeated them. And yet the girls listened on, for their hearts are attuned to the supernatural.
It matters little about the quality of the instrument through which the Holy Ghost reveals His thoughts to those He loves so dearly.

The girls sang the Credo and a Tantum Ergo with virile faith and piety combined—just what I like. They looked healthy and happy because they are healthy and happy in heart and mind. I have penned these lines, not to flatter but to express my own happiness at witnessing the glory of the grace of Christ in beautiful souls. What a consolation for the Sisters who are in the hands of God the instruments He uses to effect those wonders in divinised God-like souls.

With all affectionate regards to you and all in the Convent. I bless you and the Sisters.

Yours very sincerely in Xto.,

Returning to Ireland for his episcopal consecration at Maynooth College in June 1920—at the invitation of Cardinal Logue and the President, Monsignor MacCaffrey, Bishop Shanahan addressed the students of the College.

His talk was a spontaneous expression of the glory of the apostolate among pagan peoples, of the joy of sacrifice in a great cause—Africa and its countless millions of pagan people still awaiting the Good News of Christ’s coming. He challenged the spirit of sacrifice of the students, their idealism, their missionary spirit, their faith as he asked for volunteers for a four or five year period in pagan Africa.

The response to his appeal was instantaneous and generous. Ten of those who listened that day ultimately went to Nigeria to share the treasures of their faith. From their ranks there developed the present flourishing Missionary Society of St. Patrick with headquarters at Kiltegan. All this was not accomplished without much suffering to the Bishop. There are references to these developments in letters of Bishop Shanahan at this time.

It is given to only very few men to make an impact on their generation: to even fewer, to make an impact which extends beyond their own time. Men like Bishop Shanahan belong not to a particular era, not to a particular country but to every country.

This is Bishop Shanahan’s position in the missionary church.

(Rev. Peter O’Reilly, Superior General, S.S.P.)
My dear Lord,

I wish you a very happy Christmas, all the happier because of your recovered health.

In every letter that comes from Killeshandra there is a special reference to your Lordship. The Sisters are not happy unless they have good news about their spiritual Father. In their recent letters they said that all was well. They know that I too am deeply interested. I am very pleased to know that you are at long last over this last desperate and protracted attack.

In Nigeria all goes fairly well. The Sisters are having a hard time of it getting accustomed to the tropical damp climate of our Nigerian equatorial home. They have shown wonderful fortitude and endurance. Never a murmur nor a word of complaint. There were some little difficulties of which an echo reached your Lordship. These difficulties are part and parcel of their missionary life. In a few years they will be well over the fevers and worries that all Missioners are subject to for the first year or two of their missionary life.

Their girls’ school, opened in October, is now in full swing and a great success. You may rest assured that the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary are all you would wish them to be: and that is much.

Our training college is slowly going ahead. It meant an almost overwhelming effort to get it going, situated as we are without men or money, yet we have succeeded in putting up the first and essential buildings. We opened it in October with thirty-two students in training.

To meet the needs of the Mission we must have at least four hundred students in training. We don’t despair of getting that number, nor of being able to provide for them.

The Irish Province of the Holy Ghost Fathers is not able to meet the demands for personnel of this Vicariate. French Fathers on account of their ignorance of English can be but of little use in a mission where the school holds such a prominent position as a means of evangelization.

I put the whole matter before the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, H. E., Cardinal Van Rossum; proposing, as the only way that I
could see out of the difficulty, the creation of a new Missionary Society for S. Nigeria. His Eminence, the Cardinal, placed the project before the Holy Father who gave it full approval, with his blessing.

This means that I have now to see about getting this new Society on its feet.

If the last few years of my missionary life produce no other fruit than the nucleus of a future Missionary Society that others will organise and perfect, those last years of mine in Africa will not have been lived in vain.

So far nothing has been done. During 1929 we hope to take the initial steps by securing a house somewhere in Ireland with the consent of the Bishop of the diocese. It will be easier to manage than in the case of a Society of Missionary Sisters. Some of the Maynooth Missionary priests here in Nigeria are willing to become the first members of the new Society.

I will ask your Lordship to pray that this apparently hopeless and impossible task may be carried out in accordance with the plans of Divine Providence. In all probability I will have to return to Ireland next year. Needless to say I will go at once to Cavan and talk the whole matter over with your Lordship.

Father Tom Ronayne is returning to Nigeria at his own earnest request. He is a most saintly priest. He will do splendid work for us in one of our big stations in the interior, a station that has gone through a period of fierce attacks by the devil. It needs the presence of a saint such as Father Tom in hot corners of this nature.

Dr. Heerey is giving me every assistance I could possibly wish for. He is an ideal coadjutor. He will be fit at any time to take over and give new life to this flourishing Vicariate.

For me this is a source of special consolation. I know that he will carry out and considerably perfect plans that I would consider safe for the all-round improvement of our missionary work.

He has won the esteem and affection of Missioners and Christians alike, as well as of the Government officials. He often refers to the happy hours spent under your Lordship’s hospitable roof. We love to recall some of those delightful stories, the memory of which even out here in Nigeria, chases away gloomy thoughts and brings back some of that true, delightful peace and happiness that we ever
associate with your Lordship's hospitality at "Cullis".
With happy Christmas wishes and greetings,
I remain, my dear Lord,
Yours gratefully and affectionately,

+JOSEPH SHANAHAN.

R.M.S. APPAM.
10th October 1930.

My dear Dr. Finegan,

We are out in the broad Atlantic and near Freetown, capital of the colony of S. Leone. Tomorrow we hope to anchor in Freetown harbour and maybe get off the ship for an hour or two to see the mission. Dr. O'Gorman is Bishop of S. Leone and resides at Freetown.

The group of splendid young Irish priests that accompany me back to S. Nigeria is quite settled down to life on board a ship. Each morning at 6 o'clock, we start our Masses in the lounge. There are eight altars for the fifteen priests celebrating. Never before was there such a number of Masses together on board any ship sailing to West Africa.

Already the tropical heat is being felt. Quinine has to be taken each day rather to get accustomed to it than to ward off fever. We have completed half of our journey. On Sunday week, i.e. in about twelve days time, we expect to land in Calabar. There will begin the dispersion. Some priests will remain in Calabar, others go on to Anua, while others go further on still to Emekuku, Ihiala, Adazi, Ogboli, Onitsha, etc. etc. to start on their missionary career.

They are far and away the happiest group of men on the APPAM, indeed they are the admiration of the big crowd of passengers. Never did Nigeria receive so many priests. All in the Mission—and rightly so—attribute this to the prayers of the Sisters in Killeshandra, to the prayers that they have got said either by their friends or by the multiplicity of pious persons to whom they have sent rosaries for the last six years.

But Killeshandra means your Lordship. Whenever—and that's frequently—I think of the Convent you are ever present in my thoughts as in the prayers of gratitude I offer to Our Lord for
having made Killeshandra what it is—a centre of missionary zeal and piety.

I am now far from Ireland, in a new world in fact, but the sweet memories of all those great-hearted, generous friends of Our Lord whom I met in Ireland remain with me for all time. I know you will continue for many years to work for Our Lord in Kilmore diocese. And I know that Killeshandra will continue to prosper under the vigilant loving care of one who, exemplifies so beautifully all that’s most touching in God, and that is His divine Paternity—You are the beloved Father of Killeshandra.

You will pardon the reiteration in all my letters of this one sentiment: Gratitude. It is about all I have that is worth offering to your Lordship with my affection and my prayers.

With all kindly wishes,

Yours very sincerely,

+ Jos. Shanahan.
Pentecostal Fire

(1933-1937)

Letters of Bishop Shanahan to Sisters of the Holy Rosary on the occasion of their profession of vows give his thoughts on

The untold favour of God
    of a vocation
    to a Missionary Apostolic Congregation.

The Bishop sees the congregation as a fraternal union of friends, encouraging one another, going through difficulties with great courage and fortitude and bound together by their sharing in the happiness of God to whom they are united. It is an awareness of being loved and a great desire to hand on in a spirit of gratitude and love this divine life—the basis of their unity and strength.

Only God can transform human hearts: hence the Bishop’s stress on the Holy Spirit in missionary work.

It is God who calls
    Where there is this divine initiative it touches the very fibre of the person who is under God’s action.
    It awakens a spiritual sensitivity to what God wants . . .
        to continue the Christian mystery of life, death and resurrection with Christ who was sent by the Father and which leads us into the mystery of the mission of Christ.
    It is Mary who will teach you how to respond,
        how to allow yourself to be fashioned by the Holy Spirit
            into the living image of Christ.
My dear Sister M. Malachi,

Your beautiful letter with the very welcome news of your admission to holy profession gave me intense happiness.

During the years of my missionary life in Africa one of the greatest consolations was the vision of God at work in a human soul. He alone being God can fashion a loving spirit into the living, loving image of His own Living, Loving, Divine Self. And He grants to His missionaries this untold favour, the privilege of seeing the image of God slowly but most entrancingly imaged forth from and in a soul that was only a short time previously distorted and disfigured as in death but to the image and likeness of the enemy of our race.

It is to co-operate with Christ in this most divine of all divine works on earth that He has called you to what you are to be on the 29th—His own consecrated spouse and missionary.

How He lovingly fashions in your soul, the soul of His own bride, the living, loving image of His own divine self! So that all those that see you may get of Him that haunting vision which will be for them the means of obtaining from Christ that first grace that will lead on to their eternal salvation. And you are to have a share with your divine spouse in this great work of deification of divinely redeemed souls.

Is it any wonder you are happy and that happiness overflows from your own soul on to the souls of those who come in contact with you. You want me to share in your happiness, and I do so to the fullest extent that it pleases God to grant me. I rejoice with you and thank God in union with you for His ineffable love and goodness to you in calling you to be His bride for all eternity.

I will continue to pray for you as for each of your beloved Sisters of the Queen of the Holy Rosary that the heavenly work Our Lord has so well begun in your soul may be made ever more and more perfect.

Your life is to be lived henceforth in an infinitely more intimate union with Christ than heretofore. And your happiness will be infinitely greater because you will have the privilege of sharing it with, after bestowing it on, multitudes of souls, especially in Africa.
And won't you pray for me, that I too may through your prayers, the prayers of a child for her Father in Christ—be brought back to and nearer to the Sacred Heart of Christ alongside of my own daughters in His Sacred Heart.

My gift—God’s own special gift, will be three Masses offered up for you and your companions on the 27th, 28th and 29th, the day of your holy profession.

Leaving you with our Blessed Mother Mary Queen of the Holy Rosary, I beseech her to present you to Our Lord for His special blessing. In His name I too bless you.

I remain, my dear Sister M. Malachy,

Your affectionate Father in Xto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

P.S.—You expressed the wish that I would be present at your holy profession. Well, at the last moment it is arranged that I am to officiate. This adds to my happiness. So by the time you get this letter you will be already professed. *Ad multos annos!*—J. S.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
30th June 1934.

My dear Sister M. Finbar,

Since those distant days when by Baptism, Holy Communion—your first Holy Communion—and Confirmation your soul was taken up into God there to be immersed and transfused into His own Divine Life, no happier day will have dawned for you and your ten Novice Sisters than this heavenly ninth day of August when you are to be espoused to Jesus Christ the Son of God made man. Is it any wonder that your heart and soul are overflowing with joy at the very thought of it, with that joy poured into your whole being by the Living, Loving Spirit of Jesus Christ, by the Holy Ghost.

How good of you to write to me so that I too might share in some small way in the abundance of your happiness. Share in it I do with a heart full of joy, full of gratitude to God for all His goodness to you and to all in Killeshandra.

How good of you to remember me in your prayers, in those intimate conversations you have with Him to whom you have given
all and who in return has given you all—giving you Himself.

Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary, has obtained for you the great grace of your religious and missionary vocation. It is Mary who continues to watch over you and prepare your soul for ever greater graces. It is she who will teach you how to respond to them, how to allow yourself to be fashioned by the Holy Ghost into the living image of Jesus Christ whose spouse you are about to be. Trust Mary with an unlimited trust and confidence, just as you trust Jesus with unlimited love and confidence.

Jesus Christ at the request of His Blessed Mother will impart to you all those special graces you need to make of you a fearless soldier of Christ. No matter what troubles, difficulties, temptations, etc. etc. you meet, don’t fear. Jesus and Mary are with you. You won’t forget that the nearer we are to Christ, the more intimately we are associated with Him, the more we will have to suffer. Suffering is necessary for us. Don’t fear it. It has been blessed by God. God will always give you the courage to bear it. Be ready to find and face and overcome obstacles of every description on your way to heaven. Life is a continual warfare against evil inside and outside of us. But Christ has endowed us with His own strength to overcome it. In your letter you made special mention of “Calvary,” and of all that most sacred name stands for. We have all got to pass by Calvary to heaven. It is the way Christ went, the way St. Peter and St. Paul and all His friends went. We too want to go by that royal road, not alone, but with Him.

I recommend myself to your fervent prayers. Christ will refuse you nothing. Your own good heart will tell you all I need. The children of Christ and His consecrated spouses understand each other’s needs so well. I will continue to pray for you and all in Killeshandra and away in Africa, etc.

God bless you my dear Sister M. Finbar. In His Holy Name I bless you. May Our Blessed Mother ever watch lovingly over you. The prayer and the wish of your Father in Christ,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.
Blackrock College, Dublin.
22nd June 1935.

My dear Sister M. Cecilia,

Many thanks for your very kind and deeply appreciated good wishes and prayers on the occasion of the anniversary of my consecration—now 15 years ago.

Although you, my dear Sister Cecilia, with each and all of the Sisters in Killeshandra and Nigeria are ever present to my mind and heart as Our Divine Lord is present, yet a letter now and then comes to give new or added power and strength to the glorious gifts of Divine Faith and Hope and Charity by which we know and possess God. So do we react on each other and encourage each other along the road to heaven.

How beautifully this will be brought home to you and Sister M. Catherine and all in Killeshandra, not forgetting your own beloved parents, when on Monday morning your own brother, now a priest for all eternity will stand at the altar and bring Jesus Christ down from heaven to give Him, your Divine Sustenance—to you His child. You will understand something of what passed in the heart of our Blessed Mother when her own Jesus gave to her His own Flesh and Blood, formed from hers, to eat and drink on that night when the first Mass was celebrated by Jesus Christ in person—His own mother assisted at that first Mass and partook of that first Holy Communion. Ever since, she assists from her place in heaven at all the Masses celebrated by her children of predilection the priests who share in the One Priesthood of the One Priest, her own Jesus . . . Oh! the happy thought; and about the glorious reality those thoughts recall to us.

May Our Lord and His Blessed Mother fill your heart—during this first Mass offered up by your own brother, now a priest with Jesus—fill your heart with something of the thoughts that filled Their Hearts on that first night when the first Mass was celebrated.

With all kindliest good wishes and blessings for you and all those that are dear to you,

I am, my dear Sister M. Cecilia,

Your affectionate Father in Jesus Christ,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.
P.S.—I will pray in a special manner for my fellow-priest, your brother Father Marcellus, for yourself and Sister Catherine and your dear sister in the old home—but then what prayers will I not offer to God, prayers of loving gratitude, for the Father and Mother of Christ’s priest and consecrated spouses! God bless them for ever.

J. S.

Trench House, Belfast.
15th July 1935.

My dear Sister Margaret Mary,

I have not taken over the direction of the diocese of Down and Connor, even though I am making use of His Lordship’s notepaper and am staying here with him for a few days as his guest while giving a little Retreat to the Apostolic workers.

Now I must congratulate you on the happiness that is to be yours when you are finally professed on the 4th August. Am I right in taking it for granted that you are one of the privileged ten? If not, won’t you excuse my ignorance. You sent me—and I am so thankful to you for doing so—the news of all ten. I have just written a few lines to each of the Nigerians. I just hope the Belfast mail will get to Liverpool on time for the Nigerian mail.

I am to be in Killeshandra for the 4th August. Nigeria will be very present to all of us on that great day—and now we have such a nice group of real Nigerians back in Ireland—how one does feel that Killeshandra is just a little bit of Nigeria.

I thank you for all your letters to me and for all the great news you sent me. How I love these letters—and how I am grateful to you and to all the Sisters even though I don’t write in return. But now that I’m so much better in health I hope to make some amends for the past and write more regularly.

With all affectionate good wishes and a special blessing,

Your affectionate Father in Xto.,

+Joseph Shanahan, C. S. Sp.
My dear Mother Bernard,

Sometime ago you wrote to me a letter that filled my heart with joy; it was the letter in which you communicated the good news of the Reception-to-be of eleven postulants and also the profession of eleven novices to take place on the 15th August, feast of Our Lady’s Assumption. I have been so rushed about from one place to another that I did not write to tell you my gratitude for that good news and also to tell you how earnestly I thanked Our Lord and our Blessed Mother for the exceptional graces bestowed on you their new Novice Mistress in charge of their Children of the Holy Rosary. Twenty-two young Sisters to advance a step further towards the fuller realisation of all their heavenly desires and all under your sweet charge and motherly care! How your heart must have throbbed with heavenly happiness at witnessing such blessings being bestowed on your postulants and novices! I have been praying and thanking God ever since for those wonderful spiritual fruits produced during the first year of the young Congregation’s existence as a new and independent missionary Society in the holy Church of Jesus Christ.

Won’t you please accept my belated thanks with all the sincerest good wishes and every blessing within my power to bestow on you and on all those entrusted to your charge.

I did not speak to you during the few hours I spent in Killeshandra nor will I see or speak to you again for sometime, since I am crossing over to France, but when I do return to Ireland I won’t fail to call to see you very specially in Killeshandra.

Now I am going to do a month’s Retreat—or recollection—or rather less strict form of Retreat in my old home—France, where my religious life was begun some fifty years ago—just as the first missionaries were sailing for Nigeria.

How I thank God for granting me the privilege of making this Retreat.

I recommend myself to your good prayers and to the prayers of your novices and postulants. I will write to the group of eleven-elect—for profession—from France.

God ever bless you with greater graces for your own soul and for those under your care as spiritual mother. I will pray always very
specially for you and your intention.

   Your ever affectionate Father in Xto.,

P.S.—I am leaving for France this morning.

Seminaire des Pères Du Saint-Esprit, Chevilly (Seine).
31st July 1935.

My dear Sister M. Cecilia,

The great day of your Profession of Final Vows is at hand. I want to be with you really and truly in the Divine Spirit who unites us so intimately with Himself and with each other at that solemn moment when on the altar you hand over forever your own whole self to God’s Holy Love, to do with you as He wills.

It is the supreme act of love of the human being in return for God’s supreme gift of Himself in His Son to us. Oh! the glorious mutual surrender of God to His poor created child and of this same child to the great God of heaven, its Creator and now the Spouse of her soul. I wish I were with you, as I would have wished to be in Nigeria but God says no just now—and it is in order that we may love Him more and doing that, love each other more.

I will offer the holy Sacrifice for the ten in Nigeria and Killeshandra on the morning of the 4th August.

As you know I am doing a short second Novitiate of one month. We are a group of missionaries of all ages and nations and belonging to almost all the different African and American missions—and we are all so happy to be once again what we were, oh! those long, long years ago—now God gives us the opportunity to see how we kept the vows we made the day of our Profession. What a grace that is for all of us, especially for ancients like myself! Won’t you pray for all and for me?

   Your affectionate Father in Xto.,

P.S.—Please receive a very special blessing from me your fellow missionary and your Father in Christ Jesus.
My dear Sister Margaret Mary,

It is long since you sent me a lovely letter full of all the joy that was overflowing from your own heart as you announced the good news of your admission to profession of Perpetual Vows. I was to be with you for the great day—God has arranged otherwise. We will pray only all the more fervently that God’s holy will may be done always and everywhere especially in the hearts of those that are dear to Him, that His will may be done regardless of the cost—so He did when He was one of us here on this earth of ours—I am with you in heart and soul, my very dear Sister, especially on this occasion when you give your whole being to Jesus Christ forever. Oh, the happiness there is in knowing that Jesus Christ is infinitely happy, that our Blessed Mother is infinitely happy, and so with all the angels and saints—and then the happiness there is in knowing that those we love are happy with the happiness of God’s own presence in their souls, in knowing that they are going on the hard road that leads to heaven, in knowing that in a short time when the last limit between time and eternity has been reached we are all to meet again beyond it in eternity, never again to be separated from God or from each other. How entrancing and encouraging this is! You, dear Sister, are among those chosen ones whose heaven has already begun here and now—no price is too great to pay for it.

God bless you always,

Your affectionate Father in J. C.,


Séminaire des Pères Du Saint-Esprit,
Chevilly, par L’Héy les-Roses (Seine).
12th August 1935.

My dear Sister M. Scholastica,

It is long since you wrote telling me of the great news of your Holy Profession on Our Lady’s Day the 15th inst. And you wished me to be present! And present I would be for many many reasons,
were it not that God arranged for me to do a long Retreat instead—God knew what need I was in of this—and oh, the happiness of being once again for a month just a novice—after a whole life has been fitted in between the 1st and 2nd Novitiate—never before were you and all the Holy Rosary Congregation more present to me here in Jesus Christ than you are at present—the beauty of this reality! To be really united together in the real Divinity of God’s own life! To be able to speak to you—to each of you—and to Him all of us together—an anticipated heaven . . .

On the 15th—day of your holy profession, I will offer the holy Sacrifice for the eleven Sisters to be professed. I am pontificating here in Chevilly. All those taking part in the grand ceremony will be venerable missionaries—they now for the time being, being novices! How earnestly I will offer you to Jesus Christ, the Divine Spouse of your soul! And won’t you pray for me.

I bless you, my very dear child and fellow missionary—God bless you and grant you every happiness during your whole religious and missionary life.

Your Father in Xto.,

J. Shanahan.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
11th November 1935.

My dear Mother M. Bernard,

This is my last letter to be written in Ireland before I sail for Nigeria and I want to write it to you, dear Mother, and to your beloved novices, to send you a very special blessing and wish you farewell.

While I will continue to remember you, the novices and postulants, at the offering of the holy Sacrifice, I would ask you to grant me a special remembrance during this voyage to Nigeria.

Your happiness at seeing me so happy at the prospect of going back to Nigeria added ever so much to my happiness, great as it already was. For to see you and the novices happy as you are is the greatest happiness of my life.

I will never forget that farewell, when one and all told me with heart and lips their joy at seeing me off to Nigeria. So that ideal—
the long wished for realisation of which is the novices’ dream—for
a missionary religious Sister is “off to Nigeria in the morning”.

For this I thank God and Mary His Blessed Mother—for it is an
expression of the missionary spirit in all its love and purity—Africa!
with Jesus and Mary—Africa! Africa! With all the consequences
life there entails—Africa—through sheer love of Christ, of the
Blessed Trinity in Christ; of Mary in Christ, of the whole Church
in Christ. What a glorious prospect and what glorious company
there with all heaven assembled to bring back with our co-operation
Africa to Jesus Christ.

Now I cannot continue, for there’s no time. But the farewell you
gave me when leaving Killeshandra will ever remain in my memory
as one of the happiest moments in my life. Killeshandra is now a
fully organised missionary Society with its heart aflame with
apostolic fire, which is none other than the Holy Ghost. The thought
of this young missionary Society with all its zeal and love is enough
to fill any old missionary’s heart with untold, inexpressible hap-
piness. The rest of the journey on towards eternity is now made
easy for him for he knows now that the work of his own heart and
life is being continued on by others and those others are his own
beloved children in Christ, his own fellow missionary Sisters.

In God’s Holy Name I bless you—I bless each of the novices and
postulants. May you continue to advance closer and closer and
finally deeper and deeper into the living love of Jesus Christ, guided
by the Loving Heart of Mary, His Mother and your Mother.

I remain, my dear Mother Bernard with all your novices and
postulants,

Your ever affectionate Father in J. C.,


Séminaire des Pères Du St.-Esprit,
Chevilly, par l’ Háy-les-Roses (Seine).
(Undated).

My dear Mother Bernard,

I am enclosing a letter conveying my blessing to the newly
Professed. Some of them whom I knew wrote to me asking me to be
present at their holy Profession. I sent them a few lines apart, but
to all without exception I send all the love of charity that is in my heart for each and all. The thought of them and of the whole work in Killeshandra and Nigeria is my greatest source of happiness because it makes me love God and His poor children in Africa all the more. I see in the Sisters so many great apostles of the knowledge of Christ’s love, so many living examples and sermons in their own life of the beauty and peace and happiness of a soul that knows, loves and serves Christ, living in Him, with Him, by Him, for Him.

When I return to Ireland I will have the opportunity of telling you and your novices something of our “novitiate” here, made up of all ages and types of missionaries and from all parts of Africa.

Of the many happy months of my life this is among the very happiest—what a signal favour it is to be granted the favour of having a month’s “novitiate” just as an old missionary is about to cross the frontier between Time and Eternity! Any day the screen—the screen of this poor old body of ours may fall to leave the soul standing in the presence of Jesus Christ—now the Judge—upon whose decision depends eternity in heaven or . . . ? . . . It is a wholesome thought to think of the possibility contained in that . . . ? . . . I see now more fully realised than ever the beauty of religious life—the staunch fraternal love both human and divine that binds us all together in and with Christ—in and with poor old Africa for Christ. We have all fought many a hard battle, weathered many a storm; known the ferocity of Satan’s assaults, thinking at times that all was lost. And here we are together after it all with greater faith and hope and love in God than ever—and for each other in God; ready to face it all again and again—for we know all God has done for us—how can we ever distrust Him? And now I see you in Killeshandra joining our ranks to swell our numbers and continue the battle for Christ when we are gone. This is the joy that surpasses all other joys in an old missioner’s heart to see that the work for the love of Christ will continue with increased zeal and energy as he closes his eyes.

God bless you and all your novices.

Your ever affectionate Father in J. C.,

JOSEPH SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.
P.S.—It was a great pleasure for me to have that letter you wrote to me on your return from the house of “Plain Song” to Killas- shandra. I am enjoying excellent health as well as happiness.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
13th April 1937.

My very dear Sister M. Gertrude,

At long last the great day so longed for has arrived. You are to set sail for S. Nigeria where you will meet your own dear brother and fellow missionary awaiting you. What a meeting that will be between brother and sister in Nigeria.

How I wish I were with you on the voyage down the seas to Nigeria. I will be with you in desire and in prayer—especially at the offering of the holy Sacrifice, each morning, and at the recitation of the holy office. Tomorrow, the 14th, day on which you sail and the feast of the Solemnity of St. Joseph, I will offer up the holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the special intentions of the four Missionary Sisters on the ABOSSO, also for the whole Congregation—in Ireland and Nigeria.

Five years ago on that very day I left Port Harcourt for Ireland. In seeing the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary take my place in Nigeria I am happier than words could express. I offer to God for you the sorrows of my exile here on earth. May God accept them, bless them and make them fruitful in the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary.

I bless you and ask God to grant you a special blessing: grant peace of heart and soul, grant love of God and of souls, grant confidence in God, great courage and faith, holy and final perseverance in your holy religious and missionary vocation. Won’t you pray for me and write to me sometimes. I will write to you.

I am, my very dear Sister M. Gertrude,

Your ever affectionate Father in Christ,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.
Blackrock College, Dublin.
27th July 1937.

Dear Mother Bernard,

Your eight novices to-be-professed sent me a letter telling me of their great happiness at being informed that they are to be professed on the feast of St. Augustine. I appreciate their kind remembrance of an old missionary.

Enclosed is an acknowledgment of their letter. Later on I will write at greater length.

I congratulate you in seeing the Life of Christ—the Great Missionary, being so faithfully reproduced in the souls of your novices. In this you find a great reward for this greatest of apostolic works, the forming of the hearts and souls of apostles under the direction of the Holy Ghost.

I am back from Lough Derg, where I was privileged to see and take part in what amounts to a unique Retreat of some five or six hundred souls with unbounded piety and unbounded love for Christ and their fellow men—all saints, being built up in the living image of Our Living, Loving Christ. His Holy Spirit was very much present in that grand meeting of penitent pilgrims at Lough Derg.

God bless you and bless your novices. Recommending myself to your prayers and to theirs,

Very sincerely yours in Xsto.,

To Mother General

(1936-1940)

Your interests are as dear to me as my own life, in God's name I bless you and the Holy Rosary Congregation.

When the Dominican Mothers withdrew from Killeshandra in August 1934 Bishop Shanahan—now retired from Nigeria—wrote to the first Mother General, Mother M. Augustine Cahill. He was happy to see now realised his wishes with regard to the new congregation as expressed ten years previously.

That it should become an independent, self-supporting, self-governing religious body . . .

He wrote from Clareville, from Kenya, and from the Transvaal on many things.

I begin to see and understand how beautifully God arranges things that are best for each of us.

In one of his last letters he promises to pray for you and for the congregation that it may ever retain its spirit of simplicity, fervour, charity, profound humility, joyfulness, earnest hard work and intense loving zeal for the realisation of God's greater honour and glory in their own soul and in every soul that comes in contact with them.

I bless the whole Congregation at home and abroad.
Rev. and dear Mother General,

On Sunday last—the glorious twelfth—some 200 pilgrims from Belfast arrived in Dublin on their way to Lisieux. Their director, Rev. Father Crossin, was good enough to ask me to join them. In this way I was privileged in being a member of the first pilgrimage to leave Ireland for Lisieux, and for Lisieux alone.

We reached London on Monday morning, all went to the cathedral where holy Mass was celebrated for the pilgrims. Then the crossing over to France—and such a crossing! The sea was at its worst in shape and form and action, so bad was it that almost all on board the steamer were ill and very ill. Some few thought, aye even wished and prayed, that the boat would sink and so end that inexplicable but excruciating sense of impending disaster which afflicts all sufferers from the effects of an angry sea. This was the harsh way the pilgrims were prepared for those three very happy days that were to follow in Lisieux itself. The weather was beautiful all the time. There were many religious exercises in common each day entailing no small hardship, because the Hotel des Pelerines happened to be far from the Carmelite Convent and further still from the new Basilica.

The priests and lady leaders of the Apostolic work were privileged in being allowed to speak to Rev. Mother Prioress (Pauline), Sr. M. Therese’s sister, but the screen was not drawn.

Each day there was solemn High Mass. All the singing was done by a choir of girls, members of the pilgrimage. They sang beautifully with that ring of sincerity, conviction, faith and love that visibly moved like sentiments in the hearts of all those present at the religious ceremonies.

The pilgrimage was in reality a three days retreat not to be forgotten by those who took part in it. Each evening at 3 o’clock, there was Vespers followed by Benediction and Procession of the Blessed Sacrament. The “Adoro Te” we so often heard and loved to hear in Killeshandra and Nigeria, was brilliantly, because so proudly, rendered by the choir with the whole body of pilgrims. The procession was followed by a sermon. Later on, at 6 p.m., there was Benediction again in the Carmelite monastery.
were said each morning at the shrine and at the “Bouissonets” home of the St. Therese of the Child Jesus.

On the feast of Mount Carmel, Pontifical High Mass was celebrated in the crypt of the Basilica.

There was not a single hour given to sight-seeing. All was spent as at a retreat.

From my own personal experience I can say that pilgrimages conducted as this one was cannot but be a source of exceptional graces as well as the occasion of receiving from God countless graces for self and for others. The heart being so well prepared it is no wonder that heaven enters very much into these few passing days of almost heavenly bliss; the memory of those days with the effects produced by them in the soul will help during those dark, dreary, lonely days when the light of heaven seems to go out in the soul.

All the pilgrims felt lonely yesterday (Friday morning) as they said good-bye to Lisieux and to the saint who has now made it so famous. This morning we landed in Dunlaoghaire.

I hasten to let you know that in all my Masses you had a place of honour—two Masses were offered up for the intentions of the Congregation in Ireland and in Nigeria. Last Sunday before leaving Dublin I wrote you a hurried note telling you that I was accompanying the pilgrims to Lisieux.

On Friday next, I accompany another pilgrimage, to Lough Derg this time. I will pray for your intentions and for the intentions of the Congregation during these three days of penance and prayer. I will offer two of my three Masses for the special intentions of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady, Queen of the Holy Rosary.

On the first of August, the retreat or recollection covering three weeks begins. I am to conduct that. Will you be good enough to recommend the retreat to the prayers of all the Sisters in Killeshandra, that each member of the retreat may obtain from God the numerous graces God in His loving goodness means to bestow on each and all if only each one of us do our part—the part consisting chiefly in clearing the way for God’s divine action in the soul.

I was very pleased to learn from your letter which I received on my arrival here this morning that all in Killeshandra and out of it on business bent are well.

God bless you and all in the Congregation—now as in the past
you will all have first place in my Masses and prayers.

I remain, Rev. and dear Mother General,

Yours very sincerely in Xsto.,


P.S.—There were 14 priests as pilgrims—there were many school-teachers among whom was Miss Hogan, leader of the choir.

Of course Mrs. McCall was there with all her lieutenants—one and all were most edifying. Lisieux: ecclesiastical, religious and civil, was very much impressed—and said so—by the exceptional piety, so soul-inspiring, of the pilgrims. "Won't you come again" was the wish and prayer and goodbye addressed by all, to the pilgrims.

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Rockwell College, Cashel, Co. Tipperary.
12th August 1936.

Dear Rev. Mother General,

I expect to be with you on August 28th for the holy Profession. It is true we will be on retreat in Blackrock, until the following day, but I will manage to go up for the ceremony and return immediately it is over. Will you be so good as to let me know the hour—also whether Mass is celebrated—if it is I would like to do that too as it is such an important part of the beautiful ceremony.

The month's recollection or retreat here in Rockwell is a time of exceptional peace, prayer, hard work for all of us. The grand days of our novitiate and ordination day are recalled—and our spiritual, religious and sacerdotal missionary life re-set to the standards put before us in the Person of Christ and His Mystical Body.

After three weeks here, we all go to Blackrock for the fourth and final week when a new conductor takes over charge of the retreat.

I am very well and very happy doing whatever little bit of work God in His goodness and mercy asks me to do. Since He has detached me from all else, I find great peace in putting my whole life into this bit of work to the exclusion of all else, since God so wills it. I hear nothing but good news of Killeshandra. You are now as ever with me in that one Divine, Living Love of Jesus which
unites us so profoundly to God and to each other.
God bless you—my dear Rev. Mother General,
Your Father in Christ,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
26th August 1936.

Rev. and dear Mother General,

On my arrival in Blackrock on Saturday last the first copy of the AFRICAN ROSARY was there awaiting me. How good of you to think of me. Congratulations! May it carry in its every line a message of heavenly grace and peace to its readers. May it arouse in their minds and hearts an ever greater love for Jesus and Mary, an ever greater love for their cause in Africa and the whole pagan world. May it extend the purifying influence of Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary to an ever greater number of hearts, hearths and homes, and finally, may it bring down on its staff, writers, editors, publishers, subscribers, those special graces promised to all those who by word, pen, deed, seek to make Jesus and His Blessed Mother to be better known and loved—and also Killeshandra—the home of the AFRICAN ROSARY, to be better known and helped in the carrying out of the great apostolate entrusted to it by our loving Lord.

These few thoughts just came to my mind as I took this sheet of paper to write to you—not at all about the AFRICAN ROSARY—but about my journey to Killeshandra on Friday next.

I could not manage to get transport, so Mrs. Dawson offered me her car. I must confess that I did not want to bring anybody from among my relatives to Killeshandra for the official function on Friday—but it cannot be helped. I hope you won’t find it inconvenient to have two extra visitors for lunch. My sister and Joe are coming.

I hope to be in K. about 10 new time. We leave Maynooth at about 7. I will say the Mass and perform the ceremony, but will ask you to arrange to have Rev. Father Garde—so deservedly appreciated by all in Killeshandra—give the usual short fervorino at the ceremony. After four weeks retreat I could not think of two ideas! I am still in retreat, so I will have to leave at once after the
ceremony so as to be back in Blackrock towards 5 or 5.30 at latest. Otherwise I would break the canonical period and forfeit the special indulgences and graces granted for the occasion.

I am well and happy and infinitely grateful to God for everything —chiefly for all that has taken place where I personally am concerned since my departure from Nigeria in 1932. That was a great grace hidden away under so much pain that was I fear only too natural but not at all supernatural. Those retreats have fixed all that up—so I am indeed happy and happy too to meet you all in Killeshandra for a few hours.

Very sincerely in Xto.,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
5th October 1936.

My dear Rev. Mother General,

I thank you for that grand letter you wrote to me. It filled my eyes with tears but my heart with joy. You may be quite certain that God through the intercession of our Blessed Mother will direct and comfort you in your great office. Trust God and Mary with unbounded trust and give them back all your loving.

This is in a desperate hurry.

I am going up to Killeshandra to be with you for the seventh.

I have done a month “hard”! I know now how badly I needed it. But now also I’ve got back all the happiness of years gone by. No more doubts or hesitancy in me. How good God is—to those that acknowledge His loving goodness and their own petty selfish sinful nothingness—That’s me!

God bless you ever. I send you a special blessing with—well all the charity of my heart.

Yours ever sincerely in Christ,

My dear Mother General,

A line to thank you for your kind letter inquiring about my health—and also suggesting that if I put in an appearance at the Gresham on Monday it would help the Cause—Killeshandra. To help that cause you know there's hardly need to do more than give me an idea of what I might be able to do.

In the present case, I will most certainly be at the Gresham at 8 p.m. Yes I do know Mr. Kenny—at least we are acquainted. I will keep in touch with him and with your promoters. It will be easy here in Dublin. When I was last in Killeshandra Mother Dominic, head of your new Propaganda movement, asked me to co-operate with her in the Cause—of course I promised. Then there was question of Limerick—but of that I have heard nothing—Dublin came on instead. I am convinced your new methods—the Sisters visiting and talking in the various schools will help immensely. An organising body of promoters will complete the work. These I could see now and then so that too will help. I feel convinced that now all will be well—both for funds and vocations and for the spiritual welfare of all concerned . . .

I am getting on slowly. It was a recurrence of what took place on the voyage back from Nigeria. A great grace for me is this warning so lovingly given me by our heavenly Father to get better and better prepared for the final journey Home to Eternal Rest . . . Oh, how one longs for it—and that too is a great grace.

Once again how true the *Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus*

. . .

God bless you and all the Sisters at home and abroad. I shall continue to say Mass for you and all, daily.

With my best wish that God may fill your heart and soul with His peace and His strength.

Very sincerely in Xsto.,


Thanks for the "Collection" picture—It was so . . . well—unexpected and so *ad rem* that the sun had to shine in my little firmament—Vale.
My dear Rev. Mother General,

This evening under orders from Dr. J. Magennis, I am to go to St. Vincent’s hospital for treatment. It will take about fifteen days. After this special treatment I will be once again fit to do a bit of work. My circulatory and nervous systems have to a great extent got badly impaired but not beyond repair! All due to auto intoxication! It was that was wrong with me on the African voyage. If only I had followed your wise and kindly urgent advice I would have gone into Dr. Magennis‘ ‘garage’ immediately on landing in Ireland. But! . . . well I didn’t go, so I have to go now.

And just now you ask me up to give a hand to the Cause in Belfast! How I do regret my present situation. I need hardly tell you how anxious and glad I would have been to be with the Sisters in Belfast. But you have already so many friends in Belfast that like good wine you will need no ‘Bushman’ to tell the Catholics of Belfast who you are.

Since my return to Ireland God has done much to fix me up for the journey home and for—(thanks to His mercy and Our Blessed Mother Mary’s intercession)—a landing on the right side when the passage is over. It is only now I begin to see and understand how beautifully God arranges things and circumstances that are best for each of us even though He has done already so much for us in making us His missionary co-operators in Africa.

So poor Sister Veronica’s mother has been called away to heaven. What a great welcome she will get there, for has she not a daughter in Africa—this fact will add to her glory in heaven.

And the Ihiala Convent is completed and occupied! What good news. Poor old Father Bindel will be at this moment one of the happiest missioners in Nigeria. He has faithfully done the work God gave him to do and made it perfect in building such a beautiful home for the Children of Mary—the Sisters and her daughters, the Missionary Sisters of Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary. The clinic he took such pride in now at last beautifully arranged for, since the Sisters are taking it over.

How well I remember—long, long years ago—that first visit to the then dangerous country of Ihiala. Father Bindel was with me.
There were no roads, no bridges except a tie-tie contraption over the "Mbassi" and of course no Catholic station—not a single Catholic individual even—and today! . . . You will remember our last visit to the new convent! . . .

For all those glorious visions God has given to His missionary priests and sisters in Nigeria—visions of His own self in the souls of His African children—aye and in our own poor souls too . . . Oh, how good God is! If only all the world could see and know and love Him as we have in Nigeria . . .

God bless you ever,

Yours very affectionately in Xto.,

+J. SHANAHAN.

Blackrock College.
Christmas Eve 1936.

My dear Mother General,

Only a line to wish you and all the members of the Congregation at home and abroad a very happy holy Christmas with many happy years to follow in the service of Our Divine Lord at home and in Africa.

I am out of hospital since yesterday but am still under doctor’s orders for treatment. I will be alright again after some time.

When I’m fit to travel I’ll run up to see you and all in Killeshandra.

As Christmas gift I will—as usual—offer the holy Sacrifice of the Mass for you and the Congregation on Christmas Day.

Kindly remember me to the Rev. Mothers, Members of the Council and to all the Sisters. I will write!!! Oh, I am ashamed to write them. But I will write later.

God bless you my very dear Mother General,

Ever sincerely yours in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.
My dear Mother General,

Just now I sent you a phone message through the Gardai, ever so obliging—in Killeshandra—to tell you that poor Mother Aquinas was anointed this afternoon.

A messenger came over to tell me this sad news.

You know of course that Mother is in the Sion Hill Convent. She came down for the retreat, had flu, fell ill almost immediately with lung and heart trouble. From the start she seemed—the Sisters told me—to be seriously ill.

On Friday I returned to Blackrock with the intention of going to Cavan on Saturday. A phone message came from Cavan to tell me the Bishop had the flu.

On Saturday morning I heard for the first time that Mother was ill. In the evening I called over to see her. Mother Prioress took me to her cell. At first sight of her I found it hard to keep back the tears and repress the emotions that swept over my heart and soul, as I saw her poor worn suffering-racked features.

I knew that another “farewell” was about to be said, another parting to take place. Already there was marked on her face that Something of the eternal beauty of heaven, the seal of God on those who die in the peace of the Lord . . .

Her first words were of and about Killeshandra! Had I been there? Had I seen you and found you all well, happy, etc. etc.? Then in a few rapid fleeting seconds her mind swept over those last 14 or 15 years with the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Killeshandra. Ah how she loved and still loves you one and all. Happy little incidents, and great events were recalled: the first days shrouded in the uncertain darkness of the unknown future: then the first “Black” postulants, and oh! how black they were—those first postulants—and how dark the gloom that must have enveloped them: but through it all a voice was distinctly heard in each soul: “courage, keep on, follow me, I am with you, don’t fear . . .”, “and we kept on” said Mother Aquinas, “our hands held in the invisible but real hands of Jesus Christ . . . Then dawned the day of the first Receptions This was symbolic of the new light growing stronger and stronger in every soul in Kille-
shandra: then profession, the first professions followed; later the
sad but glorious day of the first departures for Nigeria . . .”.

All the above were rather flashes of the thoughts in our inner
souls with only a word here and there to show that both of us were
thinking the same thoughts; offering to God the same acts of
gratitude along with all in Killeshandra and Nigeria. I was told to
remain only a few minutes—so fifteen years—the most glorious
years of our lives were summed up in these few last minutes
together—we lived it all again. And now I had to go—our thoughts
went now more directly to the Invisible Presence for whose love
she had lived her whole life, crowned by its last fifteen years as the
Mother of Missionaries—of you, her beloved daughters in Christ.
I gave her my Cross to kiss—she took it, kissed it, blessed herself
with: “We will meet again!” . . . I promised to say a triduum of
Masses for her—in Sion Hill. I said the first this morning. But she
was so much better that I was not asked up to see her.

Then just an hour ago, a messenger came: “Mother is anointed,
she wants to see you . . .”.

I am back to write you these few thoughts that I cannot keep to
myself, I want you—who above and beyond all are, under God,
dearest to Mother Aquinas, to know something of one who occupies
a place in your spiritual, religious and missionary life so intimately
associated with God, with all that’s good and beautiful and true,
noble and generous that I know how eager you are for the least little
bit of news concerning her.

Mother Ursula from Cabra is with Mother Aquinas all the time.
Mother Ursula was in Killeshandra for three years!

As I was leaving the convent, Mother Xavier was to come over
from Dunlaoghaire and Mother General from Cabra. Such another
meeting took place in Killeshandra just fifteen years ago!

Each day I will write to let you know how poor Mother Aquinas
fares in a battle where the odds against her are 1,000 to one. So the
doctor told me a few minutes ago.

No need for me to ask you to pray that our Blessed Mother of
the Holy Rosary may obtain for her all the graces which she knows
every soul needs at this most sacred of all moments when eternity
is in the balance. I’m trusting this to a train conductor to have it
posted at the G.P.O.

God bless you my dear Rev. Mother General. God bless all the
Sisters.

And may He grant Mother Aquinas the great grace of final perseverance in faith, hope and love, in the willing acceptance of God’s holy will, death included, up to the very last moment of her life.

I remain,

Your affectionate Father in Xsto.,


P.S.—How are the dear patients? Mother Superior and Mother Bernard?

P.S. II—I intend—on my own account—to send a cable to Bishop Heerey and to the Sisters in Nigeria about Mother Aquinas—I owe her and the Sisters this much at least . . .

Blackrock College.
30th Jan. 1937.

My dear Mother General,

A few hurried lines to tell you that I have written to the Vicar-Capitular, Right Rev. Monsignor Soden, P.P., to let him know that I shall offer fifty Masses for the repose of the soul of the late Most Rev. Dr. Finegan in recognition of and gratitude for all His Lordship did for the Missionary Sisters in Killeshandra and by that fact, for Africa.

Also I recommended Killeshandra to the fatherly care of the Vicar-Capitular.

Finally, I sent a cable to Dr. Heerey mentioning the Bishop’s death. Father Danaher will have told you all about the last few hours spent in the cathedral before poor Dr. Finegan was laid to rest beside his uncle, a Bishop too . . .

I had to come away from the funeral to attend a Social Dinner: the Rockwell Union Dinner; such are the demands of the Cause. It is all for God!

You will have found it strange maybe that I did not return to Killeshandra. My own wish was to go, but for all of our sakes I considered it best not to go. You are all very tired and grieved after these two deaths. Don’t allow yourselves to be depressed. Pardon
the advice.
I will write again soon when we will all have had a rest—for the
living must keep alive to do God’s work for souls.
God bless you and bless all in Killeshandra.
With all kind and affectionate good wishes,
Very sincerely yours in Xsto.,
+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
24th February 1937.

My dear Mother General,
The joy your letter with dear Mother Brigid’s brought to me
today when you wrote lest I might forget the two great anniversaries
to commemorate on the 24th February. My Masses, are being
offered for the repose of the soul of poor Mother M. Aquinas, but
I did have a special memento for the Congregation today.

My wire was a poor excuse for the letter that should have been
written, and yet you are never absent from my thoughts and prayers.
But I’m very very lazy since winter set in with all the temptations
to laziness brought about by this big blazing fire, an armchair in
which even an angel would be inclined to sleep if he sat down on it.
Then there are books galore—and time to spare! While outside my
very window winter rages, cold, dark, bitter sleety winter... And
yet, strange as it may seem, I take it all and enjoy it all too, since
Providence has sent me here to do a very mild form of penance.
At least I’m getting so accustomed to it that the sense of “exile”
which almost drove me mad has left me—I’m happy here just where
I am and as I am, since God has willed it so. Did I ever think the
day would come when I could write this in all sincerity and truth!
Now you have just had a peep behind the curtain of a lazy man’s
mind.

I will go to Killeshandra on Saturday. Later on, I’ll send a “wire”
—another “wire”, when I’m sure I’m in the right train and going
in the right direction to Crossdoney.

There’s an International Rugby match on Saturday too!... I’m
thinking of offering that up as a sacrifice by not going to it and
sending on the ticket to Father Danaher. I’m writing to him. He
could come up early to Dublin and stay here for a couple of days for a change while I am in Killeshandra.

Before concluding, I want to tell you a little secret, oh, a very, very innocent secret . . . It is this . . . This letter has taken me a full hour to write! Believe it or not, I had to rewrite it five times—all my efforts were so lugubrious I had to tear the blessed things up—and almost said aloud what was burning the inside of me to explode! But there was no explosion except this very mild thing you are now reading.

I feel alright again and really happy, now that I have written in spite of it all—And also I thank you in all sincerity for writing to me as you do. Your letters make me take the lid off and let off the stuff that’s inside doing me no good! I look forward with keen anticipation to meeting you and all in Killeshandra on Saturday. I love the climb up and down that old hill in wind and rain—it does me good—but along with that I do love to meet you all without the wind and rain and the “blues”—(mine the latter).

God bless you and all in Killeshandra. I bless you and pray for you always.

Your ever affectionate Father in Xto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
30th June 1937.

My dear Mother General,

Congratulations on the new and very progressive step taken by you in getting the house in Northumberland Road; Holy Providence the funds! This one fact indicates how pleased God is with the new move.

I will offer up the holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the new temporary community on the feast of the Visitation. It is indeed extraordinary that Our Lady should have brought you to your new home on this very special feastday of hers.

The first Sisters-to-be that went to Nigeria began their preparation for their missionary work by spending a period in special training at Holles St. Hospital—how Providence works out its own plans!

Thanks for inquiries about my health. I am really very fit and
above all very happy and grateful to God for everything.

I will have a special memento at the offering of the holy Sacrifice for the success spiritual and temporal of the new work undertaken for poor mothers and their children in Africa.

God bless you and all,

Sincerely yours in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Rockwell College, Cashel.
20th August 1937.

My dear Mother General,

Thanks for your letter—“typed” and all as it was! You are forgiven. And only one page! Your splendid big handwriting was a great help to you in this that you covered half an acre of paper with just half a dozen sentences.

I was only too happy to meet you and the Sisters in Dublin—and surely that was no favour on my part. What do I not owe you?

One little remark in your letter will be referred to later in this letter. Tomorrow I am accompanying the Rev. Father Superior of Rockwell to the Missionary Exhibition in Cork. I am just calling and coming away again. I will probably meet some of the Holy Rosary Sisters there.

You are quite right in getting in touch with other Missions with a view to placing the ever increasing number of Missionary Sisters holy Providence is sending to you. I can’t understand why Nigeria is not taking at least 100 Sisters now to be raised to 200 in a few years—they will be sorry later on.

I have no news from Dr. Heerey. He will be home for the General Chapter next year. But that would not prevent him coming now.

I got a glorious letter from Sister M. Cyprian with a splendid description of the voyage to Nigeria and her first impressions of Nigeria! It did my heart good to read—even though it did make me homesick.

Please God I will start again to write to the Sisters in Nigeria after I’ve had a rest after all those spiritual combats at close quarters with the “old man” in me during the retreats.

And now let me thank you for your “typed” letter. You are quite
right in using a typewriter! ... I was as you may easily imagine delighted to meet you and the Sisters in Dublin. I don’t know where the “magnanimity” comes in—Is there anything I could do that I wouldn’t do for the daughters of Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary. Please God the day will never dawn when I could do otherwise.

I can never forget the debt of gratitude I owe you. And—you have a new Rev. Mother! Needless to say I congratulate you.

The end!—

You have the same place in my profound reverence, and no less profound esteem and equally profound affection and confidence that you ever had—only a little more all round since you rendered to me a spiritual service the magnitude of which I could not exaggerate—so please do not refer to my magnanimity.

There’s no day I don’t pray very specially for you—all my prayers and whatever few good works I do are offered up lovingly for Killeshandra. They may have a little more merit now—that’s all. All I ask from our heavenly Father is that He may continue to pour out graces and blessings untold, unstinted in each and all of you, but particularly on your own dear good self. You may believe me to be sincere in what I now write.

God bless and watch over you and all in Killeshandra and Nigeria.

Ever your very affectionate Father in Xsto.,


P.S.—!! Six pages written and still room for a P.S.! My three weeks Retreat here in Rockwell concluded today ... Happy man I am to have this work done. Yet it is glorious work. And our young and old missionaries are fine fellows. They were good as the best novices only could be—that made things so easy for me.

Today they were lonely as they left this their “Second Novitiate” for Blackrock where the fourth week of the Recollection is to take place next week, after the consecration of the new Bishop, Most Rev. Dr. Kelly of Freetown. Next week I will do my annual Retreat with them—a Redemptorist Father is conducting the Retreat—by the way I’m thinking I too will have to invest in a typewriter!

And Kilmore has got its new Bishop! I wonder how many were—or rather are thanking God that they weren’t chosen.

Most Rev. Dr. Lyons will be an excellent Bishop—and a great friend of missionaries—a great friend of yours therefore. God has
sent him to Kilmore.

P.P.P.S.!—I got the invitation sent to me for the Profession. Many thanks—but I will not be there; better than my presence will be the holy Mass which I will offer on that day for the newly professed Sisters.

God bless them and God bless all.

J. S.

Blackrock College.
27th August 1937.

My dear Mother General,

Tomorrow being the feast of your great patron St. Augustine, also feast of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, I will offer up the holy Sacrifice of the Mass for your special intentions including the intentions of the Sisters who are to make final profession and those who are to make their first profession.

All my prayers will be offered up in addition for your own special intentions.

I hope you with all in Killeshandra and Nigeria are well.

The Retreat is on here but I am not taking part in it—I feel too fatigued just now.

Tomorrow I have to go to Cork with the new Bishop, Dr. A. Kelly and Fr. O'Loughlin, so as to appear on the Missionary Exhibition platform on Sunday next to meet the Nuncio. There will be several other missionaries there too. Some of us will have to speak on the missions.

All the mission stalls—yours of course among them—are exceptionally well got up.

God bless you and fill your heart and soul with His holy peace—while replenishing your empty safe with much needed funds.

With all the good wishes and affection of my heart,

I remain,

Very sincerely yours in Xsto.,

My dear Mother General,

Only a short note to thank you for your good letter so full of God’s sunshine, of God’s holy peace in mind, in heart, even though He does permit you to experience an occasional bump and feel rather anxious when clouds gather round you. But don’t fear, “I am with you” says our sweet good Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. And if there is anybody who knows all about “palavers” it is surely He, our loving Missionary from our Father’s Home in Heaven.

You have been generous in accepting all from God’s hands—needless to say you were anxious to know whether really He does permit—aye even sometimes send trials in varying shapes and intensity—but ever and always, for the greater perfection of those He loves so dearly. This has ever been His way with His friends, His way with His own divine Son, Jesus, and His own Mother, Mary! . . .

I could not tell you how happy I was to see you and Killeshandra weather so successfully those first storms you have encountered. They will add to your virtue of fortitude and patience and confidence in God and love of God. These things like the clouds in the sky come and go, but the Sun of God’s Light and Love ever shines in the innermost sanctuary of your soul—there God ever dwells, and where God dwells is heaven, aye heaven on earth. How often have you not experienced this! But Heaven—Heaven—what must not that be—and for all eternity! . . .

Anything I can do in my own small, hesitating, uncertain way, the way of very old men, that I will ever do. It is one of the few small links—external links I mean, that God has left to me to keep me in touch with Nigeria. I am not feeling just as well as I used to. Perhaps it is because of the change in the season. I was to have gone to Kiltegan for the First Friday: I had to declare off. Now I am in doubt whether I will be able to go to the Month’s Mind of poor Father Tom Dwyer—God rest his soul—on Tuesday next—I will ask my nephew to drive me down on Monday.

I had two long talks with Mademoiselle. Never did I hear any person speak in more beautiful and more sincere terms than she did when telling me of those days of unutterable happiness she spent
in Killeshandra. Her ideal of what a religious missionary con-
gregation ought to be is being realised to the fullest in Killeshandra
of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. There is something pathetic and
wistfully appealing in that lovely soul on fire with zeal for the
furtherance of God’s cause in Africa and therefore first of all in
the missionaries who are to evangelise Africa.

She insisted on my reading her letter to our Superior General,
Right Rev. Bishop Le Hunsec—how she praised the spirit of
heavenly fervour, fraternal charity, simplicity and sincerity of the
Sisters Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in
unum. All crowned with the spirit of hospitality—Catholic and
Irish and missionary in the best sense of those terms—to add any-
thing further might perhaps seem fulsome—but no, there was
nothing of that in her heart or in the expression of her thoughts—
she said much more but . . .

I showed her around the College. She did not think that there
were such colleges in Ireland. Like all continental people she must
have imagined we had not progressed beyond the category of first
class Bush Stations—with emphasis on the “Bush”. And to her
astonishment and great edification she found Ireland to be some-
thing of the nature of a mighty big Church with God and His
people living together with something of that charming and tender
familiarity—but reverential familiarity—to be found in a good
Catholic home where children and parents are for each other a
source of the purest, most innocent, most delectable happiness—
thus for Madamoiselle . . . God be with her. Her visit to Kille-
shandra will have given to her a new happiness that will console
her and accompany her all the way to heaven.

My sister is calling this evening to take me on to Maynooth for a
few days rest—to get over the flu. I won’t be in Northumberland
Road on Sunday. The poor Sisters will have to face the cold and
dark wintry morning on their way to hear Mass at Clarendon St.
Even that is real good training for them. The lay nurses have to do
this too—all turns in useful. And I know those Sisters in Dublin
are ready to do and face no matter what God asks them to do,
even though it is hard, very hard at times.

I called over to see the University Sisters. I hadn’t been to see
them for some months. They are a very happy pair, finding an echo
of their own happiness in everybody they meet in all the events of
their university life. They see all things tinged with the sunshine of God’s Life in their own souls.

What a source of ineffable joy it must be for you, dear Mother General, to know that this is the absolute truth, and that it is true of all the Sisters no matter where they are. Oh, long and always may this be true of each Sister and of all Sisters whether in Killeshandra, in Africa, in Dublin, Scotland or England.

I will continue to pray for you and for the Congregation that it may ever retain its spirit of simplicity, fervour, charity, profound humility, joyfulness, earnest hard work, and intense loving zeal for the realization of God’s greater honour and glory in their own soul first of all and next in every soul that comes in contact with them at home and in Africa—but especially in their African Mission Stations . . .

And now for a full stop—I bless you, bless your joys and sorrows, your trials and consolation—your direction of all those choice souls entrusted by Jesus Christ and by His Blessed Mother to your motherly care—have for them the loving tenderness Mary had for her Jesus; the tenderness Jesus had for Mary His Mother and for each one of us—then I bless the whole Congregation at home and abroad, recommending myself ever to your charity when you kneel before the Tabernacle . . .

I am now as always, my dear Mother General,

Very affectionately in Christ Jesus,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
13th Nov. 1937.

My dear Mother General,

I enclose the signed receipt for the 14 holy Mass intentions with honoraria you so kindly sent on to me.

On the 23rd I will offer up the holy Sacrifice for the special intention referred to in your list.

I am so glad to hear that all are well in Killeshandra and Nigeria.

I have shaken off that annual attack of “flu” and feel alright now. God sent us such lovely weather in October and November one could not help being influenced by the sun physically and mentally.
In God’s holy Name I bless you and the Congregation at home and abroad, ever remembering you and all in my prayers, holy Mass and holy Office.

I am, my dear Mother General,

Always affectionately yours in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
2nd December 1937.

My dear Mother General,

Many thanks for your good letter and kind heart enclosing cheque for £5 for 20 Mass intentions. They will be said quam primum.

I am sorry I won’t have time to write at greater length for the present. I am off to Kiltegan just now for the First Friday Conferences. This is some small contribution God permits me to make towards the Mission Cause in Nigeria.

Don’t pay heed to the excitement caused in the diocese by the Cardinal’s visit to Killeshandra accompanied by your Bishop.

The last issue of the AFRICAN ROSARY was simply splendid—it is tout ensemble.

The Sale of Work in Dublin was not a huge financial success but the good work was done all the same. Your missionary helpers are generous hearted and full of apostolic zeal. It’s that that pleases God and will obtain funds if not from the actual Sale of Work at least from some other quarter.

I called to Northumberland Road—and had a glorious cup of tea with delicious toast and a “small talk” as dessert—all are well. I heard Mother Peter is in Dublin—but—not to be importuned by visitors—I may call all the same to see her and talk over our motor journeys in Nigeria—not forgetting the canoe trip on the Niger. I owe a letter to Mother Brigid: meanwhile I send her all kind, good wishes, and promises to write.

God bless you and bless all your intentions for His glory and the welfare of the Congregation.

Yours ever affectionately in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.
P.S.—I see there’s nothing like being in a hurry when one has a letter to write. My “bus” hasn’t arrived yet—afraid of the cold, wet evening, perhaps. Addio—et Vale.

Blackrock College.
17th December 1937.

My dear Mother General,

I am very sorry to have to tell you that I am not fit enough in health to travel to Killeshandra for Christmas. There is a recurrence of that trouble I had when in Nigeria in 1935. It has been getting worse for sometime back. It comes in irregular spasms and at irregular intervals so that I cannot depend on myself, for any length of time, nor can I be far from home. I have tried to get rid of it by the usual effective method of direct resistance, to find that, at long last this does not work. Yet I am told by the doctors that my heart is all right—for it is that organ that gets affected—only to be careful and avoid strain or exposure to hard weather conditions.

Since your letter inviting me to Killeshandra I made up my mind that I would go at all costs. Yet, I thought it prudent to wait and see. Now I am convinced I cannot go. If I did go, I would spoil your Christmas.

And yet how anxious I am to be with you. For there’s no place on earth I would rather be than in Killeshandra for this glorious festival.

I am anxious to know if you had any news from Rome. I have been praying for you that our Blessed Mother may obtain for you the Constitutions that she knows to be best for you. When Rome decides on this matter you will of course see in it God’s holy will—and the will of a loving Mother too. The decision, whatever it is, is only ad experimentum—for a time, to see how things go. You can always come back to your Mother the Church and tell her that in your opinion you think things might go better if the methods were improved—but always leave the final decision to the Church. Her voice is the voice of Christ.

I hope you are very well and also that all the Sisters at home and away are very well. I wish you and all a very happy, holy Christmas and a happy holy New Year. God bless you and the whole Con-
TO MOTHER GENERAL

Very affectionately united to you in the Living Love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Very sincerely yours,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Blackrock College.
30th December 1937.

My dear Rev. Mother General,

In a letter from Mother M. Philomena I had the great news: the approval of the Constitutions of the Congregation of Our Lady Queen of the Most Holy Rosary by the Holy See; and that this news had reached Killeshandra before Christmas. What a heavenly Christmas gift from Jesus and Mary! Later on, other Christmas letters came from the Sisters all full of the joy that poured out from their grateful hearts.

I join your hosts of friends in congratulating you while sharing in your joy and in the deep prayer of gratitude that mounts from the heart of the Congregation to the throne of God passing through the hearts of Mary and Jesus—for is it not the Holy Ghost Himself in you, with you, offering you to God.

It was a great sorrow for me not to be with you on this occasion more especially—but try as I might I could not go. Up to the last moment it was doubtful whether I could say Mass at all on Christmas night: it was some form of gastric flu. Much against my will I refer to this personal matter—for three weeks I have been unable to go out of doors. Now at last all the trouble has disappeared as it did on my return from Nigeria in 1935.

You will be pleased to hear that Sister Mary Martin has been granted permission by His Ex. the Archbishop of Dublin to open in Dublin a house of her new Congregation "The Medical Mission of Mary". It is all for the furtherance of the cause of Christ in Africa.

H. E. Msgr. Grandin has invited me over to France to assist at his consecration in a fortnight's time. He has retained along with his love for his own mission Oubangui all the love he held and still holds for Nigeria. In the true Missioner's heart there is room for a
profound love for every poor human soul.

As soon as some urgent Mass intentions are acquitted I will offer up for you and the Congregation a triduum of Masses in thanksgiving for God’s infinite loving goodness and our Holy Mother’s loving care of her own Congregation.

With good wishes for every good gift from on high. I bless you, my very dear and Rev. Mother General, and in you and with you the whole Congregation.

Very sincerely yours in Christ,


30 Rue L’homond, Paris.
28th Jan. 1938.

Rev. and dear Mother General,

Tomorrow morning I leave Paris for England and a little later on, England for Ireland.

I will call to see the Sisters in London. I was even thinking of going up to Scotland from Liverpool to see the Sisters in Craiglockhart—but . . . that’s not definite just now.

Mgr. Grandin’s consecration at Alencon was a very grand exhibition of real Catholic life in that city blessed by being the birth place of the Little Flower.

There were immense crowds gathered to see the grandiose ceremony. It took place in a magnificent old Basilica. There was an Archbishop and six Bishops present, besides Monsignori and Deans, ad lib!

The last consecration of a Bishop in the Basilica and in Alencon took place some 300 years ago . . . Msgr. Grandin’s heart is still in Nigeria! So he said at the banquet.

He is to “fly” back to his Mission. It will take him four days and will cost much less than the voyage by sea and land.

I have spent fifteen glorious days here in this country that I ever love. Nowhere do I feel more at home. France is now as ever a great missionary country and the home of saints too.

The Superior General was most anxious to hear about Killershandra. He was highly pleased to know that now you are a Pontifical Congregation—"Ad multos annos," said he, when hearing
this bit of good news.

Needless to say I had several conferences to give always and ever about Nigeria! I find no small difficulty in working up the enthusiasm of old for the threadbare theme of Nigeria.

'Tis late and I am to leave by the early train in the morning. You and Killeshanda and the Sisters in Nigeria, in England, Scotland, Dublin—are ever present to my mind—I can’t forget you. God bless you and all at home and abroad.

I am, my dear Mother General,

Ever very affectionately yours in Christ Jesus,


P.S.—Please remember me to the members of your Council, to the Community and to all in Killeshanda.—J. S.

Craiglockart T. C., Edinburgh.
4th February 1938.

Rev. and dear Mother General,

I spent a few delightful days with the Sisters in St. Charles’ College, London. The Sisters are ever so well and happy and a credit to the Cause and the Missionary Congregation in whose interests they are working so hard in that “outpost” of the missionary world, London. From London I went on to Birmingham, where I spent another couple of happy days—but oh! the number of Mission talks I had to give to I don’t know how many categories of Sisters, Probationers, Nurses, Domestic Economy Students, etc. etc., winding up with visits to all the schools—and to all the patients . . . But they were and are all so deeply interested in the Missions that I couldn’t but comply with their wishes to hear something about life on the Missions.

And now here I am in Craiglockhart—not because there is an International Rugby match on tomorrow as some people might be inclined to think . . . Since Wednesday night—it was like walking into a little Convent Station, hidden away in the Scottish Bush—and oh, the happiness of meeting a bit of Nigeria, a very living bit too in the little group of Nigerian Missionary Sisters.

The Sacred Heart Nuns have arranged to have me stay here in
the priests' rooms so that I can frequently meet and talk with the Nigerians. How well and happy they are is a source of delight for me and much more for their Superior General and the Congregation. The Sacred Heart Sisters gave them high praise for everything: religious life and deportment, hard work at their various studies, in fact a standing example to the whole establishment.

Ever since I came here we're living in thought and conversation in Killeshandra and Nigeria. They have got me to tell them innumerable stories about the old places at home and in Nigeria. And 'tis lonely I'll be when I set out on my journey homeward, as I was when I said goodbye to the Sisters in London.

I am not going to the match tomorrow! The Sacred Heart Sisters told me today that their friends told them I would be wise not to go—so I'm not going—but I will listen in. We will form up the two International teams here in their lounge and so follow the péripéties of the game by ear and movement, if not by sight.

On Monday I move on to Manchester and from Manchester to Holyhead and Ireland. When I get there I will make up my "report" from my "secret notes" and give it to you verbally when I meet you—so I have told the Sisters.

I am so glad to have come on here and to have seen and heard all those good things that fill my heart with joy.

The spirit of Killeshandra is something living, glorious, big and full of heavenly promise for a rich harvest of souls to be reaped for our Divine Master, Per Ipsum et cum Ipso et in Ipso in Africa and in Killeshandra.

Every kind good wish to all the Sisters, novices and postulants in Killeshandra. God bless them and God bless you, my very dear and Rev. Mother General.

Ever affectionately yours in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

P.S.—I have definite "orders", nothing less, to write this letter and have it ready for the post at 4 p.m. I've done it. This, they tell me is one of the many things they learn to make other people do—by means of the "Froebel" system. It has worked on me alright!

P.S. (ii)—You'll have heard by now who won the match—Edinburgh!

P.S. (iii)—How is poor Mother M. Peter? I send her all my good
wishes for a speedy recovery of her health with the promise of a special little prayer for that purpose.

Clareville,
15th March 1938.

My dear Mother General,

A line to tell you that there’s a recurrence of that heart trouble which makes it almost impossible for me to walk. It is purely of a nervous nature—and gives no trouble so long as I remain quiet. It will be alright after a good rest. A long introduction to the object of this note: I regret I cannot call to see you, much as I would like to.

I wish you and the whole Congregation every blessing on St. Patrick’s Day, and on the feast of your great patron, St. Joseph.

God bless you and the whole Congregation. I will say Mass for you and the Congregation on St. Patrick’s Day and on St. Joseph’s Day, and recommend myself very much to your prayers.

Ever very affectionately yours in Jesus & Mary,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
5th April 1938.

My dear Rev. Mother General,

I am about to leave Dublin for Edinburgh. Before I leave I wish to thank you for your very kind letter—and for your Sisterly advice. I know how earnest it is and how anxious you are for my welfare. I wrote to Rev. Mother in Scotland in the same sense as you did.

This Retreat, for reasons known to God and a little to myself, too, has cost me much—and I wasn’t too well—it is all the better—and I am very happy about it. It has meant “Lent” for me. I know you will ask for prayers for the spiritual success of this little Retreat—the first of its kind I’ve directed.

All affectionate good wishes and a great blessing for you, my dear Rev. Mother General and for the whole House on the Hill—as for the whole Congregation.

Ever yours very affectionately and respectfully in Xsto.,

No Address.
Easter Saturday 1938.

My dear Mother General,

I am too fatigued to go to Killeshandra. I regret this, but it cannot be helped. But you will have so many visitors—including the Bishop for the ceremonies on Monday—during those Easter days that it will be no small relief for you to know that you will have one visitor less. I am going down to Maynooth where I hope to spend a month! and at least get a good rest. I will run up some day, if Joe Dawson can manage to motor me up to Killeshandra. I hear you will have Dr. Heerey soon. You will have some great Nigerian days when he comes!

I called at Northumberland Rd. today to wish them a happy Easter, but I did not know the Sisters had been out at the morning ceremonies in the college! We travelled—without the fact being known to me—in the same tram on to Northumberland Rd.—and to make matters worse, I got off at the wrong place—and they saw that too! . . . Now, don’t I need a rest!

I wish you and all in Killeshandra a very holy, happy Easter.

I am, my dear Mother General,

Yours very sincerely in Christ,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
2nd May 1938.

Reverend and dear Mother General,

Most Rev. Dr. Heerey has arrived in Dublin with Father Jos. Delaney—they intend to go to Killeshandra tomorrow—Tuesday evening, to see you and the whole Sisterhood. Dr. Heerey has been good enough to invite me to come along with him and I’m going in this way to accept your kind invitation to Killeshandra. It was worth waiting for this unique occasion. It will be a Nigerian day for all the Sisters—for you first of all—and then, for all of us.

I can just spend a day—for I have to get ready to do a month’s Confirmation for Most Rev. Dr. Harty in Cashel. That means preparing a few subjects connected with the great sacrament of
TO MOTHER GENERAL

Confirmation.

I hope you and all the Sisters are well. I have had a good rest—fortunately—and feel fit for the bit of work holy Providence is asking me to do in Cashel diocese.

I am, my dear Rev. Mother General,

Affectionately and sincerely yours in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

P.S.—May I ask you to be good enough to tell Rev. Mother Superior, Mother M. Cecilia of my coming along with Dr. Heerey and Father Delaney. They will of course have informed you of this already.—J. S.

Blackrock College.
24th June 1938.

My dear Rev. Mother General,

I found my way back to Dublin without going astray. At Mullingar I met my old friend: the Guard in the Sligo-Dublin express. We are fast friends now. He takes a paternal kind of kindly interest in me by putting me into a first-class carriage with orders not to change until the train stops in Dublin . . .

Those were happy restful days spent in Killesthandra. Thanks for everything—and for the Mass intentions, receipt for honoraria of which is enclosed herewith.

The great day in Blackrock was somewhat marred by the rain which poured down steadily all day up to 4 p.m. when it cleared off. However there was ample room for all who came to the Garden Party. They were accommodated in the many halls of the college. There could be no question of going on the grounds.

I did not go to the Garden Party. There was quite a goodly number of Bishops there including the Cardinal and your own Bishop of Kilmore with several Bishops from Africa. I was glad to be able to render a little service to Most Rev. Dr. Lyons. He brought the wrong colour in Vestments—white instead of red—I was delighted that he pontificated in our chapel here in Blackrock.

Dr. Neville thought he could get free from the Garden Party—and would have succeeded were it not that his sister came across to
Clareville—in all her finery—to compel him, oh ever so gently but very firmly, to get up and put on all his grand robes to accompany her into the "heart of things"—the college halls.

What was most remarkable at the luncheon and meeting was the way in which the whole Church—bishops, priests, men and women—were all mixed up in chapel, refectory and halls. This was the "Catholic Church" in action. And everybody liked it. It made all feel perfectly at home in their "Father's house and home here on earth".

Dr. Heerey did not come to the Meeting . . .

I wish to be remembered to all the Sisters, novices and postulants in Killeshandra. They with you and your Council Members, Mother Superior, Mistress of Novices, etc. etc. are ever present to my mind especially during the offering of the holy Sacrifice and recitation of the holy Office. This you know of course and yet I wish to tell it to you once again so that in your charity you may remember me in your Masses, prayers, Holy Office. As years pass by I feel an ever greater sense of weariness and inability to do anything in the spirit in which one should live and act in fuller conformity with God's holy will as the inevitable end draws each day very much nearer: time becoming more and more remote, while eternity impresses itself ever more vividly as the one great final reality with God. So I want you to pray for me that I may persevere and be faithful to God to the end; that in spite of the inevitable fear of God's just judgment I may have ever greater hope in His mercy. How He insists on telling us about His love and His mercy today—feast of His Most Sacred Heart. And won't you ask Our Lady, Queen of the Holy Rosary, to be a Mother to me now as in the past—our advocate at the end where times ceases and eternity begins—the thoughts of an old man and a sinner at the close of his life . . .

God bless you all.

Ever very sincerely yours in Xsto.,

Reverend and dear Mother General,

Many thanks for your kind letter of invitation to Killeshandra for the Professions and Receptions—I cannot possibly manage to go. I'll go later on after our own Retreat and that other Retreat I've to conduct in England. By that time your visitors will have left Killeshandra and you will be glad those so-called holidays of yours are over. How exhausted you all must feel after those strenuous weeks of Retreats and corporal works of mercy in the shape of visitors being entertained—even though all is a work of sincere love for Christ in His visitors as in all else.

I am grateful also for your generous Mass offering—receipt enclosed herewith. Miss Philips was deeply impressed by all she saw and felt and loved during those few hours she was privileged to be among the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. She is a soul that is passing through a crisis. What does God want her to do with her life? How is she to spend it—in religion or in the midst of an unloving world? Won't you please pray that God may enlighten her and that she may have the grace to see and do what He wants her to do.

I'm calling over to Cabra to see and congratulate Rev. Mother General on her great voyage to Africa.

I hope you are well and happy and that the Retreat has been the success God wants it to be for you. I bless you and all in Killeshandra.

I'm happy and grateful beyond words to tell of all our good Mother Mary has obtained from her own Jesus for this old sinner and ex-missionary who is being admitted back to Africa, and maybe to God's holy love after those years of exile in Ireland.

Won't you continue to pray for me—you are always remembered in my prayers.

Very sincerely yours in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.
Rev. and dear Mother General,

I wish you a very happy feast on the occasion of the festival of your great African Patron and Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine. Under his special guidance and intercession may you do for that part of Africa entrusted by God to the Congregation over which you are placed by Him as mother, ruler and inspirer, what St. Augustine did for North Africa and the whole Catholic Church.

I will offer up the holy Sacrifice of the Mass for you on Sunday.

Our Retreat—a grand Retreat it was too, concludes tomorrow. Archbishop Goodier is a great missionary, and therefore also a great man of God.

On Wednesday I have to cross to England to give my last Retreat in Europe! I have given but few. Strange my first effort was tried on the poor French Sisters near Dungarvan—and my last—and second to Sisters—given to the Sisters of St. Joseph. It is strange that God should call me to give them a Retreat—but I partly know why holy Providence has so arranged things.

I am well and very happy. I believe that God has let me off the remainder of that penance He meant me to do here in Ireland. It must be that the Holy Rosary Sisters put in a good word for me. How happy I am to be off again to Africa—even though it is East and not West.

I hope you and all the Sisters at home and abroad are well and that all your retreats, receptions, professions have been successful and blessed by God as usual.

God bless you—and bless with you the whole Congregation.

Ever sincerely yours in Christo,


Clareville, Blackrock College.
13th September 1938.

Dear Rev. Mother General,

I am just back from England to find your letter and kind invitation to Killeshandra awaiting me. Tomorrow, Wednesday, I hope
to arrive in Killeshandra about 3 p.m. Father Fullen is motoring me along. But . . . we will have to get away on Thursday morning to keep an appointment in Omagh, thence back to Dublin to keep your own appointment on Saturday—to meet Most Rev. Dr. Lyons at 3 p.m.

Just now I cannot—to my great regret remain longer with you. I belong already to Africa and my new home there.

On Sept. 18, i.e. Sunday next, I have to be at Navan for the laying of the foundation stone of the new college—Dr. Blowick's special invitation.

On Sept. 20th I have got to attend the centenary celebrations of the Propagation of the Faith at the Pro-Cathedral—Father Clarke’s special invitation . . .

When that’s done I have to cross over to England with Dr. Heffernan, or alone for ordinations at Castlehead!

But whenever I do get a few days free, when my stuff for Zanzibar is packed and ready, I'll spend a few days in Killeshandra.

I cannot forget that God has given me six years here in the neighbourhood of “The House on the Hill”.

The Retreat went off alright. St. Joseph insisted on my giving that little Retreat. I think I have paid off all my debts now—this last was worrying me a bit—for I owe much to St. Joseph. Now all is set aright. Many thanks for that lovely little St. Joseph card—all the rest of the news for tomorrow.

God bless you and all,

Ever very sincerely in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
16th September 1938.

My dear Rev. Mother General,

Just a few lines to tell you that the Exhibition of Paintings was opened yesterday. There was a good gathering for the opening ceremony; also a good sale of paintings, by comparison with sales on similar and former occasions.

It was a great pity that Most Rev. Dr. Lyons was absent. But His Lordship had sent us a grand letter which was read and much
appreciated. I was asked to say just a few words on the outlines suggested by His Lordship’s letter.

Mr Frank Fahy, Speaker of An Dáil, was present. He made a splendid speech. Then came the Editor of the Anglo-Celt, Cavan. And his speech on Killeshandra was the gem of the proceedings. His Excellency, Most Rev. Dr. Neville spoke—by request—just a few well chosen words as he always does.

There was a lively interest taken in the proceedings by all those present. The audience included the family of Mr. Clifford: father, mother, brothers and one sister.

There was regret that the pictures had not or could not be taken to Killeshandra that the Sisters might see them. I had tea with Mrs. Clifford, Miss Clifford, Father Grant, and another great friend Mr. Alcock (?)—of Killeshandra.

Mr. Cogan the Secretary of the Irish Arts Society left nothing undone to make a success of the Exhibition.

Mr. Kevin Kenny was a most efficient chairman. Mrs. Heade was there too and most earnest to help in every way.

As a souvenir of the occasion I secured a little oil painting for you in Killeshandra—“COPPERMINES, AVOCA”. It somehow, reminds me of Killeshanda. At the same time I was told to select a picture for myself—at your request. I chose “FROM CLARE ISLAND”, a sea-scape to remind you of those grand sea voyages out to Africa. I would ask you to accept this as a little souvenir of Mr. Clifford—now in the Trappist monastery, Roscrea.

A poor old woman came in with all she had—some 10/- or 15/- to buy a picture in order to help the poor Missionary Sisters. And she set her poor heart on one lovely little picture—which was priced twice the amount she had—no matter what price it was she’d have it, and pay for it too—so the Committee arranged to let her have it for the 10/- or 15/-. Wasn’t she happy to have it as her very own—a dear token of the grand Missionary Sisters and of the Grand Painter now become a Cistercian monk—old woman, Painter, Sisters: all missionaries!

Tomorrow Sunday, I’m to be at Navan, where I have to respond to the Toast of the Missions. There are to be some twelve Bishops present with crowds of our Irish missionary friends—clergy and faithful people. It is for an old missionary, a sight to gladden the last days of his life.
TO MOTHER GENERAL

How wonderful to see this outpouring of the Spirit of Christ over and into the hearts of Catholic Ireland that they may co-operate with His Holy Spirit—the Living, Love of our souls—in being His instruments enabling Him to pour out over Africa and the whole pagan world the over-flowing life of Divine Grace from Ireland’s heart into the poor starved pagan heart of the world.

God will bless Ireland now as always with blessings untold not alone sufficient to maintain and fortify our holy Faith at home but to spread it afar; to help Christ to build up His Kingdom on earth which His enemies would fain destroy. But they shall not prevail.

I thank you and the whole community for your ever deeply appreciated hospitality during those few days which I had the privilege to spend with you in Killeshandra.

Before concluding I would like to mention that during my stay in Ireland I have done my best to help on the Missionary Cause of our own Province. It was the only way at my disposal of helping—very indirectly but I believe very really—not alone the cause of Africa in our own Congregation but also the cause of Africa in the Congregation of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary.

The Rev. Father Provincial has been very generous to me, were it not for his assistance well . . . we’ll leave it at that. He did assist me. Once again he was the instrument of Divine Providence who always sees that His own have much more than they need.

That will explain my journey to Omagh instead of staying with you in Killeshandra.

God bless you and all in Killeshandra and Africa.

I remain dear Rev. Mother General,

Ever sincerely yours in Jesus Christ,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Blackrock College.
5th October 1938.

Rev. and dear Mother General,

Thanks for your kind letter inviting me to the Great Feast on Friday next. I have re-read carefully the directions you have so carefully written out for me in the hope that I may reach Killeshandra
safely about 12 or so tomorrow.

I would have gone up yesterday but a cold kept me here. The weeping, whooping, wheezing stage is over with all the "good humour" that ever accompanies it. I'll be alright tomorrow.

And you will I know believe me—when I tell you I haven't done a single thing yet for the voyage to Kenya!

20 things keep coming along at a time—all wanting to be done...

I've put my two feet down now. When I get back from Killleshandra I'll start to get ready.

I hope you and all are tip top. And then you are all ready for the West Coast.

With all best wishes,

Ever affectionately yours in Xsto.,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
3rd November 1938.

Reverend and dear Mother General,

I have taken it on myself to ask the Right Rev. Msgr. Le Hunsec, our Superior General, to call to see you and the Sisters in Killleshandra, accompanied by the Rev. Father Provincial, Dr. Murphy. His Lordship will call on Sunday next. I hope to be with the party. Just now I can only surmise that he will arrive between 12 and one o'clock.

You know the very deep and very kindly interest His Lordship takes in the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary.

Whether he has been to Killleshandra once before I cannot recall. He will be glad to see you and all the Sisters.

There is just one small matter I want to mention! You were good enough to ask me what I would accept as a little souvenir of Killleshandra—and rather foolishly! I mentioned a Green Tunicle and Dalmatic for Episcopal ceremonies. During my years in Nigeria I never used them once! And that’s why they are in shreds. Please don’t get them—Dr. Heffernan tells me he has not got any because they are not needed. I had to use them here in Ireland, but that’s altogether different from Africa.
TO MOTHER GENERAL

Now you would give me great pleasure in giving me just a group photograph of the Sisters in Killeshandra—and of the Sisters in Nigeria. Any one you may have at hand—just as a remembrance of you and of the past both in Nigeria and Killeshandra.

Of course you are busy getting ready for Nigeria. God speed you and Mother Dominic on your journey.

With all kindest good wishes and blessings,

Ever sincerely yours in Xsto.,


My cold!!! We'll say nothing about it—but I do hope to be free of it before Sunday next.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
4th Nov. 1938.

Rev. and dear Mother General,

On Sunday morning at 10.30 a car leaves Blackrock (with me in it!) to “pick up” Rt. Rev. Mgr. Le Hunsec, Dr. D. Murphy (Provincial) and Rev. John Byrne (of Rockwell), on our way to Killeshandra. We hope to get there between 12 and 1 p.m. (5 in all).

Thanks for your letter I received just as my own to you had been posted.

God bless you and all,

Ever sincerely in Xsto.,


Blackrock College.
11th Nov. 1938.

My Rev. and dear Mother General,

Just a line to tell you that in my thoughts and prayers I am with you and the whole Congregation during those days when you are preparing to say a temporary farewell to those that live and work and prepare to become perfect religious missionaries in the “House on the Hill”.

I feel it would be out of place to be in Killeshandra just now.
But I will see you for a few minutes on Tuesday next.
I send with you all my love to the Sisters in Nigeria, to Nigeria itself, to every one of its children. I can never forget Nigeria.
A letter came this morning from France telling me that a berth has been secured for me on the “Explorateur Grandidior”—of the Messageries Maritime Cie—sailing from Marseilles on the 1st Dec. I am glad that this matter is now finally settled.
A note from Maynooth says that my poor sister is seriously ill and in danger of being called away by our heavenly Father at any moment! . . . And she may get over it just once more. But my departure will not help. But God will be all the more lovingly merciful no matter what happens.
Will you be so good as to recommend her to the prayers of the community that she may make the best use possible supernaturally of those last painful days on earth. Is it not heavenly to have heaven to look forward to—and eternity where there will be no more partings, nor tears, nor sorrow. And yet they are—with Christ on Mt. Calvary—what obtain heaven and eternal rest for all. Pardon this little note of sadness, there are other notes of profoundest joy and hope and trust in God.
God bless you, my very dear Mother General,
Ever sincerely yours in Xstol.,
+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Durban, S. Africa.
21st September 1940.

Rev. and dear Mother General,
Tomorrow I leave S. Africa on my way back to my home in Nairobi, Kenya. The three months spent here were indeed very happy months.
The Sisters are well and happy in spite of the difficult circumstances in which they have to work. You know all about this matter so I need not refer to it.
When I get back to Kenya I will be in better mood and in better circumstances to give you some of my personal impressions on missionary work in S. Africa especially the missionary work that the Sisters are called upon to do in a country so very different from
S. Nigeria.

I am deeply grateful to Our Blessed Mother and to Our Lord for this privilege bestowed on me in being permitted to meet the Sisters here in S. Africa—how I shall pray for them!—now that I know where they have to live and work and sanctify and save their souls.

The Sisters are full of courage and absolutely convinced that eventually their work under the seal of the Cross, the seal of God’s mercy, will be the success that God wants it to be—but only after many years’ work, and even then, with humanly speaking poor results.

There are at least two other Vicars Apostolic that are anxious to have foundations of Holy Rosary Sisters in their Vicariates—of this I will write later.

Enough for tonight. I do feel so wretchedly lonely and at the same time so very happy in the depths of my heart and soul having had once again to say farewell to those I may in all probability never again meet even here in Africa. Nairobi is close on 2,000 miles away—and the War! God guard and protect His poor children during those terrible days—all His children—whoever they are. God grant this poor tormented human race peace based on His Justice and His Charity.

I send to you my dear Mother General and to all the Sisters, Novices and Postulants all my good wishes for your every happiness of mind and body. With God’s blessing and the love of this old heart of mine—

Very sincerely in Christ,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.
Letters to the Sisters and Others

(1927-1940)

"I feel that every letter demands the courtesy of an answer."

Onitsha.
28th November 1927.

My dear Sister M. Therese,

I wish you a happy Christmas and a holy happy New Year. At the same time I wish you to know that I take a very intimate part in the joys and even the sorrows that will alternate in your human hearts as they did in the human heart of Christ on the occasion of the departure of the first members of the little religious family for actual warfare in Africa.

Our Lord has wrought heavenly wonders in your hearts and souls during those happy years you have spent together preparing for the days that are now in front of you.

Jesus Christ has revealed himself to you a most loving tender friend. He has opened wide the gates of your hearts to pour oceans of divine love from His heart into yours and in return you have given back to Him for ever your own hearts through the heart of our Immaculate Mother. Now you understand the meaning of: FORTIS EST UT MORS DILECTIO—LAMPADES EIUS LAMPADES IGNIS ATQUE FLAMMARUM.

I don't know of any greater happiness than that which accrues from seeing those we love, penetrated and enveloped by the love of God and forming with Him that perfect union He spoke of at the Last Supper just before His Passion. That is the love that binds
the Sisters in Killeshandra to their divine Friend. May that love ever increase. May that union ever grow more intimate.

A thousand thanks for the letters you have written to me. To know you and all in Killeshandra are happy makes me happier than words can express. I won't forget your reminder that we have a Mother to help us in our struggle against heresy and the devil, its author: SANCTA MARIA VIRGO CUNCTAS HAERESES, SOLO INTERIMISTI IN UNIVERSO MUNDO.

God bless you my dear Sister M. Therese. In His Holy name I bless you,

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Onitsha.
29th November 1927.

My dear Sister M. Columba,

My wish for you on Christmas Day is, that your heart and soul and whole being may be ever more and more penetrated by, and enveloped in, the love of Jesus Christ, whose spouse you are soon to be on the day of your holy profession. I was happy to hear that Sister M. Paul is to leave the ranks of the novices to become a professed Sister. Her profession will be for all of you the occasion of new graces and of the strengthening of your religious and missionary vocation especially.

The departure of the first Missionary Sisters will be the ‘baptism of fire’—if I may so say, of the new Congregation walking right into the battle line—and one of the hottest corners too—there to take up their stand and die, never to retire, never to be defeated, their thinned ranks ever to be replenished by eager willing soldiers—Sisters formed in Killeshandra whose one ambition is to give to Christ through sheer love of and for Him, their life.

Get ready for the day when Christ will assign to you too the part you are to hold in His name and under His leadership. I hope your health is good and strong as the walls of Derry!

My thoughts are often with you and my hopes are in you as in each and all of the Sisters. I thank God that I will have the happiness of seeing the Holy Rosary Sisters in Nigeria before I die. You must
not forget the priests you promised me. I know you will get them. If only I could see a hundred of them here it would not matter after that, when the Call came, the adsum would be on my lips, for I would have had the wish of my life on earth fulfilled: missionary priests and Sisters by the hundred in dear old Nigeria! . . .

God bless you my dear Sister M. Columba. In His holy name I too bless you.

Your ever affectionate Father in Xto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

P.S.—In case there is any novice to whom I have not written I would ask of you as a favour to let me know for I meant to write to all. It is the least I can do in return for the great trouble they have gone to in writing to me so frequently and giving me thereby moments of great happiness.—J. S.

Onitsha, S. Nigeria.
Christmas 1928.

My dear Sister M. Columba,

I wish you a very happy Xmas followed by a holy New Year with every blessing your heart can wish from the Divine Hands of the little Infant Jesus.

I am deeply indebted to you and to the novices in St. Joseph’s, for your great trust in God which enabled you to obtain from Him the priests you promised me when I was leaving Killeshandra. In all, nine have been sent to Nigeria, one was ordered, at the last moment, to remain in Europe on account of his health. This is a wonderful answer to your prayers for Nigeria. There were other graces, very exceptional graces too granted to us during the year, thanks to your prayers. Now I hear that the postulants you asked Our Lady to send you have come . . .

Now I want very special prayers for (1) our seminary; (2) our training college; (3) our Sisters’ school and their own health; (4) a special, very special object that is of great importance for the securing of priests, many priests for this Vicariate—I don’t see or know how the project can be carried out. Won’t you and all in St. Joseph’s pray that it may succeed if it is God’s holy will—but I know it is
God's will, only the way to carry it out seems shrouded in darkness. You must promise to continue to write to me as you have done during the year. I love all the letters that come from Killeshandra; yours needless to say just as much as the others. I love to get a peep at your souls bathed in the Divine Sunshine of God's love. There are no closed doors in your hearts for God and all that pertains to His honour and glory. May His Divine Presence influence you ever more and more, to be more and more like unto Him, the Great Missioner.

May your happiness ever increase as the years go by. God bless you my dear child and guard you all the days of your life.

I am, as ever,

Your affectionate Father in J. C.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Onitsha, S. Nigeria.
Christmas 1928.

My dear Sister M. Gertrude,

I wish you a very holy, happy Xmas. May the divine Infant bless and make of you a fervent, zealous little missionary according to the desire of His own divine heart for you.

I am grateful for your kindness in writing to me during the years, letters that gave me great pleasure because they revealed the great progress you are making on the royal road to missionary and religious perfection.

The day is fast approaching when you too will be with us in Nigeria. The Sisters in Onitsha are getting everything ready for the newcomers. You can hardly imagine the happiness it will be for them to meet you and greet you on your arrival in Africa, while you, on your side will be equally happy to meet those who have borne so generously without even a moment's faltering the exceptional hardships they had to endure as pioneers.

Won't you write to me and tell me all about yourself. Don't bother about what the other Sisters write. It is your own good self that I want to see and know and love as a Father loves to see and know and love his own child in every word the child speaks and in every line it writes.
God bless you and watch over you my dear child. In His name I bless you,

Your affectionate Father in J. C.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Catholic Mission, Onitsha, S. Nigeria.
Christmas 1928.

My very dear Sisters,

I have very special pleasure in wishing you a happy Christmas while sending you at the same time the good wishes of the whole mission: Christians, teachers, missionary Sisters and priests with my blessing. Dr. Heerey unites with me in sending you his best blessings.

*Here a very long extract is omitted as it was published in Volume I, page 88.*

I will now send to each one my personal blessing in a little sheet apart. I will add to this a few extracts from the Sacred Returns of the year. Also might I add that in the future as in the past I will count on your generous affection to overlook my negligence in answering your letters. I will continue to look out for your letters as in the past. I hope I shall not fail to prove myself worthy in some small way of your confidence and affection. I will also look out for several “new”—it is the expression we use in Africa—Sisters to strengthen the ranks of our great “Five”.

In spirit I will go with you across the fields of Killeshandra and look out far away over the glorious expanse of our native land while wending our way to the “Fort” to pay a visit to our mutual friends the “Fairies”. Then there is that little group of medals—each one given at the cost of some cherished memory with which it was associated—most secretly hidden under the lovely soft sward in the most secluded part of the “Fairies” domain—awaiting the day when the chaplain’s new house is to be built. When it is built I hope to have the happiness of spending a long, long Xmas with you when I will relate to you who may still be at home, the great feats of your own Sisters in distant Nigeria.
Meanwhile God bless you. I will say one of my Xmas Masses for your intentions. To each and to all I send my most affectionate blessing. It comes from the heart of him whom you honour and rejoice with the title of

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ JOS. SHANAHAN.

P.S.—This letter is written from Calabar but I hope to be back in Onitsha for Xmas Day.—J. S.

Onitsha.

Thursday evening, December 1928.

My dear Sister M. Brigid,

How anxious I was while waiting to have direct news from you about poor Mother M. Dominic and Sister M. Gerard. Seldom were letters welcome as yours were when Emenike walked in with them a few moments ago. Thank God, Mother and Sister M. Gerard are so well. It is quasi-miraculous. The good news made all of us in Onitsha happy, especially Sisters M. Joseph and Patrick. I can say for myself that I have seldom felt such relief from a painful strain. And if I feel this how much more do you and still more our dear patients themselves. You and they have gone through a long and painful ordeal. But now it is over.

Christmas Day, your first in Africa, will be a day of exceptional peace and joy and gratitude.

May I add that in addition to the great good news conveyed by your letter there was a note of kindly sisterly affection that has produced the effect you wished it to produce. God bless you for your devoted affection and generous sincere friendship towards an old friend and now a fellow-Missioner. It is in this way we should understand each other and overlook the passing weakness of our weak human nature.

I won’t refer again to what you have asked me to consign to oblivion. I believe you when you say the incident which took place shall have no effect on our mutual relations. But even if it had, well, there is only one thing to be done: bow one’s head and accept this cross too. I had made up my mind to it. Let it be as God wills. I
accept all the blame and take all the consequences. Many a time this has been my lot before today. But I can’t forget the kindly words you and Mother M. Dominic have addressed to me on this occasion.

In all your dealings with me in your whole life as I see it and I believe as God sees it, you have no pardon to ask. You have not once given me offence—let this be dispelled from your thoughts.

I wish you a very happy Christmas. Although we have not the pleasure of being in the same community and parish for the celebration—God will compensate for this little sacrifice in granting you very special favours on this great night.

I am, my dear Sister M. Brigid,

Your affectionate Father,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Catholic Mission, Onitsha, S. Nigeria.
16th July 1929.

My dear Sister M. Gertrude,

One of the greatest and most solemn events in your life is about to take place. In a few days you will have the honour and joy of being officially received and consecrated by the Church as the professed spouse of Jesus Christ.

Your heart is full of love, the divine love poured into it by the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ. Your whole soul is flowing over with the light and gladness and joy caused by the presence of God who from all eternity has chosen you to be on this day, His own spouse. How happy you are my child, you alone can tell. I with your many friends and wellwishers rejoice in seeing you so happy, so blessed by God. Your happiness redounds on all of us your fellow-missioners. Your happiness becomes ours and with you we wish to join in that beautiful hymn of praise that wells up from the hearts to the lips of God’s chosen friends: Quid retribuam Domino, pro omnibus quae retribuit mihi.

God grant that your whole life may be a continuation, on an ever increasing scale, of the heavenly happiness that is yours on this great day of your holy profession.

I will have a very special memento for you at the offering of the
holy Sacrifice for you and the ten novices who on this day are clothed by the Church in the white garments of holy reception.

And won't you say a prayer for all those who had on one day, a day now passed forever, the happiness that is yours, that they may renew and reinvigorate in their souls the great grace that was given to them on that day. Pray for all of us Priests, Religious, Missioners. Pray for the poor Blacks that their souls may be made white as snow by the effusion into them of the Spirit of Divine Love—the Giver of all good gifts, the Holy Ghost.

I remain, my very dear Sister and child,

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Seminaire Pontificale Francaise.
January 1930.

Most Holy Father.

Prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, I wish to return thanks for the grand gift of one hundred beautiful gold pieces which you deigned to send me yesterday by Monsignor Venini Diego.

I wish to give pleasure to Your Holiness by using a portion of this gold, the Pope's gold, to make the rings to be worn by the first nine Sisters of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary on the day that they will pronounce their final vows, the 25th February of this year.

These rings made from this gold, now more precious than gold, will always be a reminder to them of the tender paternal affection that the great missionary Pope bears towards them. He loves all the Faithful who are his children, but he has a very special predilection for these generous-hearted virgins, who consecrate themselves to the apostolate among the poor Blacks of Africa.

While embracing the feet of Your Holiness, I beg for my missionaries: Priests, Brothers, Sisters and Catechists: for my Seminarians: for all my Christians: for the poor pagans and finally for me, the favour of the Apostolic Benediction.

+Jos. Shanahan.

Rome: 16 January 1930

(Copy from the French of handwritten draft of letter to Pope Pius XI.)
Rome.
29th January 1930.

My dear Sister M. Therese,

Before I leave Rome for Paris, a line to tell you and all the Sisters that you and they are ever present to my mind and thoughts during the many pilgrimages I am privileged to make to churches and localities hallowed by the saintly lives and holy deaths of countless saints and martyrs.

I asked our Most Holy Father to give the Sisters in Killeshandra a special blessing and His Holiness gave it peramanter—most lovingly! I will tell you all about it when I return to Killeshandra in the near future.

God bless you and all the Sisters,

Your affectionate Father in Xto.,

JOS. SHANAHAN.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
Feast of St. Joseph 1930.

The Novices and Postulants

My dear Sisters,

Your kindly greetings with the fervent prayers, communions and holy Masses you offered up for my intentions on St. Joseph’s great day gave me great pleasure. I know your prayers were heard and that as a result Our Lord will grant greater graces than ever to dear old Nigeria and to each and all its missionaries and their beloved spiritual children.

Many thanks for the beautiful rugs for the car. They are all the more beautiful, all the more appreciated because every weave in every thread—and there are multitudes of them—is an expression of an act of love for God, whom and whom alone, you wish to honour and please in the person of one of His unworthy representatives. I know He has accepted this gift already, but in His name I
accept it and return you sincere thanks.

I must call up some day and let you see how well the car looks and how comfortable one feels in it on account of those lovely rugs. There's little I can do on my part in return for your ever considerate kindness except to promise what I have so many times promised already—to have an ever-more vital remembrance of you in the presence of Our Lord at the offering of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. I will ask Him in a very special manner to grant you in ever-increasing abundance, those wonderful graces that will enable you to co-operate with Him in giving Him perfect freedom to weave into your own hearts and souls, into your whole being, the living, divine likeness of His own divine self—so that He and you may be one as He is one with His heavenly Father. He too one day will offer each one of you before the whole court of heaven to His own Father in heaven, as an alter Christus. You will be the gift of Christ to His Father...

May God bless each one of you—and in His holy name I too bless you, my very dear children.

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
22nd March 1930.

The Professed Sisters, Holy Rosary Convent, Killeshandra.

My dear Sisters,

On the day following the profession of final vows in the Holy Rosary Convent, Onitsha, Dr. Heerey wrote a glowing account of the great and unique event: "The four Sisters", he wrote, "made their final vows yesterday and it was a day of complete happiness for all. I have not seen such a spirit of unalloyed happiness among them even in their very best days...". And yet, the Sisters in Onitsha—including in a special manner those who through serious illness were compelled to leave it for a while—have had to go through exceptionally hard, trying days—a suitable preparation for them who now and forever are the Consecrated Spouses of Christ the King of Martyrs as of Virgins.

It seems that Sister M. Catherine did the part of Rev. Mother
for the day in splendid style. Several Fathers assembled for the
great occasion. Father Murray played the organ while Fathers
Kennedy, Foreman and Hagan sang the pieces beautifully.

"The school went on during the whole Retreat: the girls were
simply perfect. (Just imagine perfect girls in Nigeria!) No one would
believe they were there at all. What a change from the wild girls
of a year or two ago!" All of which goes to prove that God is well
pleased with His Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary since He
is pouring out untold blessings on Nigeria through their
instrumentality.

But we must never forget that it is the whole religious family
that is at work in Nigeria, in Onitsha. You are evangelising Nigeria
while in the little chapel, as you are while in the refectory, the
kitchen, the laundry, or out on recreation. Everyone of your
thoughts, desires, acts, are blessed by God as the thoughts, desires,
acts of His Missionaries.

I would go further and say the Missionary Sister at home has by
far the most difficult task to perform, for, all the time, under
obedience, she is staying in Ireland while her whole being is calling
her far away over the seas to the land of her missionary desires—
Africa.

I mention this because it may be thought that the Missioners in
Africa do not consider their fellow-Missioners at home in Ireland
as Missioners at all. It is not so. And the proof is that not one of us
in Africa would ever, of his or her own free will, ever again return
to and remain in Ireland.

Dr. Heerey wrote also a bit of good news in connection with things
of this earth: viz. the yearly grant. The Sisters received on the 25th
February as grant for their school the sum of £639. 12. 6! This is
remarkably good. So that, in matters spiritual and temporal the
Holy Rosary Missionaries are doing well in S. Nigeria. You will be
interested to know the grants earned by the few assisted schools in
S. Nigeria. Here they are:

1) Immaculata School, Onitsha: £639. 12. 6
2) Training College (Boys) ,, 806. 4. 1
3) Holy Trinity, ,, 530. 0. 0
4) St. John’s, ,, 255. 0. 0
5) St. Joseph’s ,, 252. 0. 0
6) Onitsha Town School, ,, 475. 0. 0
That is nearly £3,000 for all the schools at Onitsha. About £5,000 was received for all the other schools in the Vicariate. Of that amount, about £1,000 went to the schools in the Calabar Province. The total of all grants from the Education Office at Onitsha was: £12,000. So that the Catholic Mission has something to do with the education of the country.

In addition to those assisted schools you know that there are some 1,200 unassisted or catechist schools, each of which cost a minimum of £1 per month. You can make up the amount and see how generous our poor Blacks are.

Willie Nwaile of St. Joseph’s, Onitsha, was sent on to Adazi to take the place of Pk. Okolo, first class Cert. teacher who is taking over charge of the Onitsha Town practising school.

The new convent at Owerri is completed. Who are the first three or five Sisters to be sent there? The building of a new church—the cathedral in fact—is to start soon at Onitsha. Mr. Gilbert—a Dublin engineer and architect and a Protestant too, is to give every help possible. Mr. Baynes is gone from Onitsha to Umuahia to replace Mr. Fischer. Mr. Quinn-Young is taking his place in Onitsha as Inspector. By the way, the plan of the Onitsha cathedral is to be somewhat like St. Mary Major’s in Rome. That’s not unambitious.

You will most probably have all the above items of news and a hundred times more in the letters you will receive from Nigeria. No matter. I wish to join with our missionaries in Nigeria and Killeshandra in sharing the good news as well as the happiness that God has bestowed on all of us on the great memorable occasion of the first final vows taken in Killeshandra and Nigeria by our fellow-missionaries—the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary.

God bless you my dear Sisters.

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.
Exchange Hotel, Liverpool.
1st October 1930.

My dear Sisters, Novices, Postulants,

To each and all I send a farewell blessing before setting foot on board the APPAM for dear old Nigeria. You know well I would like to write to each one of you for I can without any effort—quite the opposite—see each one of you as I loved to see you in your places in the choir—or in the more homely gathering in the back parlour—and still better in that delightful ramble over the green fields of Killeshandra. God ever bless and watch over each one of you.

One day, please God, you too will be here in Liverpool on your way to Nigeria. It will be one of the happiest days of your lives.

On our way down by the coast of Spain we will in all probability meet the sun. If so, we will do what we can to induce his royal highness to show his face occasionally in this dear land of grey skies.

With all affectionate good wishes,

I remain, your ever affectionate Father in Xto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

R.M.S. APPAM.
7th October 1930.

My very dear Sisters,

It seems ages ago since I had the happiness of spending a few minutes with you in the back parlour, ages ago since we went to the fort to say goodbye to the fairies—and how long ago it looks since we said goodbye and you wished me “God speed” to the strains of that most beautiful of beautiful hymns: “Go ye afar . . .”.

Here we are, just outside the door of Africa; of dear beloved Africa. In an hour’s time we are to anchor in the harbour of Bathurst. The sun shines in all his tropical splendour. The grey clouds with the cold and rain and grey seas were left behind us long ago. Long faces have grown visibly round and merry, sea-sickness left us with the departing grey skies—some few Missioners had to pay their rather unpleasant form of tribute to Neptune.

We occupy a whole section of the ship all to ourselves. The whole ship has to admire this vigorous, healthy, happy group of Irish
missionaries—not excluding—quite the opposite—the three missionary Sisters that accompany us. Each morning we have the use of the ship's lounge all to ourselves from 6 to 7 for our Masses. There are eight altars erected and 15 Masses celebrated. How we pray for you and for Africa—for you who are so soon to follow us over this same ocean. And we bless God's great big ocean, and his great big sky that both may be ever so kind and gentle when you our Missionary Sisters sail over that ocean under this blue sky.

I will leave it to you to write home to those who, later on, will follow you down this self same ocean, vivid descriptions of life on board, vivid descriptions of sea and of the moonlit, starlit, sunlit skies. Whenever I get a chance I "sleep"—Aye, sleep! if I could—but on board a ship with some 500 souls including 64 ladies—there is little chance of being lulled to sleep by the gentle swaying of the ship and the monotonous swish of the waters rushing by.

I had intended to start my Christmas letters while on board, but I fear I can't do even that. A ship is a little world in itself. All the other little worlds are excluded far away from it. On it sails as if it alone existed. Signs of interest in any other world appear only when "land, land" is heard from mouth to mouth—as if nobody had seen that marvellous matter for ages past. Occasionally sea monsters are reported to be visible away—oh—always very far away on the watery horizon. There's a rush to see the monsters—but—but—only to find that they had just disappeared. Today, Father Thady O'Connor announced a spouting whale—oh—but spouting water hundreds of feet high. By the time the curious inhabitants of this little world of ours arrived, the whale too had gone west. All the same, I have very little difficulty in going back to the House on the Hill.

During the day I have little trouble in having the happiness of being with you in thought at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass and at the recitation of the Divine Office and at Benediction. Our Masses on board begin at 6 a.m. The babel of talking grows less towards ten at night to end altogether towards 12. Life restarts at 7.30. The passengers form gradually a kind of community. They know each other at least by sight. Ever afterwards should they meet they will recall the days spent together on such and such a voyage on such and such a ship. So do we sail, each day bringing us nearer to Nigeria: 320 miles each day.
I think this is about all this old head of mine will do today. I will send you a few pages—no matter how uninteresting—were it for no other purpose than to tell you that each of you is ever present to my mind. I have the utmost confidence in the prayers you are continually offering with the whole sacrifice of your own selves to God, that Jesus Christ may be known, loved and served by every soul in the world—but above all in S. Nigeria.

Goodnight . . . May God bestow on you ever greater blessings and bring you ever nearer and nearer to His own sacred Heart through the heart of our Blessed Mother of the Holy Rosary. To each of you I send a special blessing.

I am, my very dear Sisters,
Your affectionate Father in Xto.,

†JOS. SHANAHAN.

Catholic Mission, Onitsha.

My dear Mrs. Ryan,

The memory of those very happy hours spent with you all in your very hospitable home at Abbeyleix accompanies me over the seas as I sail nearer and nearer to my old beloved African home. What a happiness I will find in telling Mother Brigid at Onitsha all about the old home, all about those she loves so dearly!

Annie came to North Wall to see me off. I can never forget all her kindness to me, all the care she took of me, and the good she did to me during my stay in St. Vincent’s Hospital.

I hope you are all very, very well. The next time I come home I hope to be down in time to see the Blue Bells. Those lovely Blue Bells! How well I recall that first visit when I first saw them in all their glory. They remain in my memory as symbolic of that first meeting with you—even though it ended with Bessie, your beloved Bessie coming away from all she loved for the sake of One whom alone she loved still more.

I send you my blessing and continue to recommend myself and Nigeria to your prayers. You know you are not forgotten in Nigeria.
LETTERS TO THE SISTERS AND OTHERS

With all kind, good wishes to you and Pat and May and Joe,
I remain my dear Mrs. Ryan,
Yours very sincerely,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Onitsha.
20th March 1931.

My very dear Sisters, Novices, Postulants,

I received with feelings of deep gratitude to God the letters you wrote to me at Christmas and now on the occasion of the festival of St. Joseph.

Although I have not written to you since my return to Nigeria I know I can feel confident that you will not construe my silence to mean indifference to or want of, supernatural affection for you who are so dear to me.

I won’t make any promise—I fear my promises have no longer any value—but I may say that I have the intention of writing to you a little personal note in answer to the personal letters you have written to me. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to spend a week conversing with you on paper. Just now it simply can’t be done.

Your beautiful references to Mother Xavier and her voyage to Nigeria filled my heart with joy. Every line of every letter was full of the spirit of Christ—you are all missionaries—of that there can be no doubt. And all the sympathy is for the heroic Sisters that have to stay in Ireland to do God’s holy will there and fulfil His mission there too. In the olden times the departing missionaries got all the sympathy and the tears—the Holy Ghost is very fond of His children in the House on the Hill. And indeed they are fond of Him too.

I daresay you are all—sailing in spirit—down the Bay of Biscaye with dear Mother Xavier and her four missionary companions. So are we. The Sisters find it difficult—I speak of Onitsha—to remain anchored on terra firma—they would fain meet the voyagers somewhere about the Canary Islands.

We have elaborate arrangements made for meeting Mother Xavier with her little band on their arrival in Nigeria. They will start
off with a glorious motor-ride into the bush—the dark, gloomy bush full of hideous monsters lurking in the inky blackness of the already too gloomy forest . . . They’ll have to go through all that—won’t it be thrilling! Mother Mary Brigid will lead the way—being the bravest and most daring of all! I hope to follow next with the "Isis." A lorry will bring up the rear with 100th part of the luggage.

I’ll tell you all—or if I don’t somebody else will—all about our first meeting at Port Harcourt and then the journey up through the bush to that lovely convent of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary at Emekuku, about one hundred miles only . . .

I wish you all a very happy Easter. Maybe I would do well to follow that up with a wish for a very happy Xmas. But I don’t. I intend to start writing my Xmas letters to you immediately after Easter.

Oh, I hear them calling me—late—a full half hour at least. So goodbye for the present. God bless each and all of you. You are ever in the prayers and thoughts of

Your affectionate Father in Xsto.,

Jos. Shanahan.

Onitsha.
20th March 1931.

My dear Sister Mary Gerard,

It was no small pleasure I can assure you to see once again the familiar handwriting on the envelope that came all the way from Cork—a thousand thanks for your letter and kindly good wishes. Now when I think of you there is a kind of composite picture: a blending of the Sister M. Gerard I knew in Onitsha; the Sister M. Gerard I knew later on in Killeshandra; and the Sister M. Gerard I left on the banks of the River Lee with Sister M. John. This last one I cannot forget. I knew the hardships in front of you; knew what a tremendous sacrifice it all meant. And I felt for you deep down in the depths of my heart. But I also knew that no matter what sacrifice God asked of you you would accept it—that you would not be overcome by any obstacle. But I fully realised how intensely your very sensitive nature would feel the passing hardship, the weight of the cross, for a moment only, for now as ever, that big
heart of yours full of kindness and of love for Jesus Christ would carry you over every difficulty.

It is a long time since we met here in Onitsha! long even since we met in Cork. And yet you are ever as vividly present to me now—even more so—as when you were here in Onitsha. I look forward to the great pleasure I will have in meeting you next spring in Ireland—you and Sister M. John. I promise to spend more than an hour with you then—and we'll talk of old times and together we'll get ready to face with renewed fortitude the task God has assigned to us. We need each other's help as the days grow sometimes long and we become weary. A cheerful word—and—a good round cheerful face from a fellow soldier does much to shorten the road, the day and the burden.

The hospital is one of the great factors in the success of the mission here. The work you are now doing is of the highest value from the missionary point of view... Now I think that's quite enough for one day.

You must write to me again—when you are over the FLU!!!

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, how 'fluey' you were when you wrote that last letter of yours. Said I to myself, is this my own Sister M. Gerard at all, at all?—or is it somebody else writing in her name? So off I went to the signature—Sister M. Gerard—I could see the grim determination in your face as your steel pen engraved letter after letter on the notepaper.

There and then I determined to write and tell you I was sorry I hadn't written—instead of writing to you and asking for an apology for not having written to me! I can imagine what you'd think and say had that letter of mine gone on to Cork.

I will write again very soon and tell you something about the Mission. I'm everywhere “in general” and nowhere “in particular”—travelling all the time and feeling at times almost as cheerful as you did after ten days Flu.

Mother Xavier is coming. This will mean great things for the Mission and for the Sisters.

I have to go to Anwa—NW—not NU. The horn is sounding for the last half hour. So—off I am.

You have a very special little corner in this old heart of mine. You are ever present to me with all the Sisters at the offering of the holy Sacrifice. God ever bless and strengthen you to lovingly do His
holy will, especially when it is hard. I recommend myself to your prayers.

I am, my dear Sister M. Gerard,
Ever your affectionate Father in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Onitsha.
9th June 1931.

My dear Sister M. Columba,
A few lines to wish you a very happy feast with many happy returns of the great event here in Nigeria. I had a very special memento for you at the offering of the holy Sacrifice in the convent chapel this morning. I wish also to thank you for the very kind letter you sent me for the 6th June.

I need scarcely tell you how happy I feel to have a few lines from you now and then—for you and the Sisters are dearer to me than all the rest of this world. I hope to meet you soon at Emekuku.

God bless you and ever fill your heart and soul with the great joy and happiness of His own divine presence there. In His name I too bless you.

I am, my dear Sister M. Columba,
Your very affectionate Father in Christ,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Onitsha, S. Nigeria.
25th July 1931.

My dear Sister Sarah,
I was happy to learn that you have the great honour and privilege of being admitted to the reception of the holy habit of religion as a Missionary religious. Accept my heartiest congratulations with a very special blessing. I share in the fullest way in the joy that now fills your heart and soul. And this joy is only the dawn of the infinitely greater happiness that will flood your soul as you go through the Novitiate to the Profession, please God, and then to the scene of your labours in God's vineyard, out here in distant Nigeria.
On the 25th I will offer up the holy Sacrifice for the eight former “All Blacks” and now the “All Whites” for time and eternity.

Dr. Heerey will be with you on the 25th. Later on, next year I will have the pleasure of greeting you in the glorious white robes that symbolise so well the new state of life you are entering.

Many thanks for those delightful letters you and your sister postulants have written to me. I love to hear from you, and to know of and share in your trials, battles, victories in the great conquest of your own heart and soul for Jesus Christ. God bless you.

All kind wishes from

Your affectionate Father in Christ,


*Note: Sister Sarah became Sister M. Malachy who died in Emekuku on 10th September 1963.*

Onitsha.
2nd March 1932.

My dear Mother M. Brigid,

I wish you a very happy Easter with perfect recovery of health. What a pleasure it was for me to have a letter from you. And how happy I am to know from your own dear good self that you are travelling 50 miles an hour on the way to complete restoration of health.

We are all well here in Nigeria. The Sisters are very happy and look strong—the terrific heat notwithstanding. A tornado now and then eases off the burning situation. These tornadoes are blessings, very suitable as well as peculiar to Africa. You remember them, don’t you?

The profession of Sisters M. Columba and Felim was like that of Sister M. Catherine six months ago—a source of untold joy not alone for them and the Sisters but for all of us their fellow Missioners. There were twenty of them there gathered in from the four corners of Nigeria. Father Treich was there from the wilds of Uturu. He had two new safety pins and one big new button linking up the refractory east and west boundaries of that aged, venerable multi-coloured coat of his. He had the newest and most
up-to-date explanation of the Apocalypse for us. The fall of the
powers indicated at last the fall of the “Bête” ... Then we had
Father Walsh of Umuahia and Father Bindel on his old motor bike
from Ihiala, etc. etc.

The ceremony was for each and all of us a recalling as well as a
renewal of that happy day long ago when we too made vows as
religious and priests. It was a whole retreat—a retreat that went
over all the years of our missionary life—done in one morning.

The Sisters shall be forever associated with their old and young
fellow-missionaries in connection with that most beautiful and
memorable scene in the convent chapel at Emekuku and that other
at Onitsha when three Missionary Sisters knelt before Our Lord
to be really and officially espoused to Him for all eternity.

We missionary priests and Sisters are all very happy, and all of
us have a clearer and more supernatural knowledge than we ever
had before of our glorious association with Christ—and His spouse
here on earth, the Church—as His missionaries.

Pardon this long-winded reference to matters that are better left to
the silence of one’s own heart where they are understood without
words. I wanted to convey to you that we are all happy. This I
know will be for you a source of great happiness.

I am leaving Nigeria a fortnight after Easter. I will be in Ireland
and Killeshandra sometime in May. I have visited the whole
Vicariate confirming more than 5,000 souls. On Sunday next I am
to confirm a little group of Father Walsh's children at Umuahia.
This is for me a source of exceptional pleasure. I am now very
happy at the thought of leaving Nigeria. All is in God’s peace. How
could I wish for a happier termination to my term of office as Vicar
Apostolic?

It will be a real joy to meet you and all in Killeshandra. You
mentioned the Constitutions. Don’t send them on here to me. If my
advice can be of any use to you on one or another point I will
give it to you when I get to Killeshandra.

I thank you for your kind good wishes for the Feast of St. Joseph.
I have any amount more to write, but I must wait until we meet in
dear old Ireland. You know you are never forgotten in my prayers.
God bless you. In His holy name I bless you.

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

My dear Sisters,

I am very grateful to you for the beautiful letters you wrote to me on the occasion of the feast of my patron, St. Joseph. I spent one whole evening reading them. There were few evenings happier than that.

I wish on this occasion to thank you for all the letters you have written to me in the past, very few of which I answered. For various reasons I could not manage to write as I would have wished to do, and answer each one of your letters. But every letter that came reminded me of the obligation I have to pray for you more fervently at each and all of my Masses.

At the holy Mass I have you all with me gathered around the Chalice. And I know this is a beautiful reality, for do we not all gather around our Divine Lord, the One and same Divine Lord, each morning whether in Nigeria or Killeshandra or China; the same Blessed Lord around whom gathered Mary and Joseph, and later on the apostles; and ever since the whole Catholic Church with all the angels . . .

I will soon meet you in Killeshandra to answer personally each one of your letters.

You have contributed by your letters to make this my last St. Joseph’s Day in Nigeria the happiest day in my missionary career. It is on that day I give for the last time confirmation to a group of confirmandi in Onitsha.

God bless you. In His holy name I, too, bless you.

I am, my dear Sisters,

Your affectionate Father in Xsto.,

Onitsha.
16th March 1932.

_The Novice Sisters:_

My very dear Sisters,

Before I sail from S. Nigeria, I wish to thank you first of all for the beautiful letters you wrote to me recently on the occasion of the Feast of St. Joseph, my patron saint. I want to thank you for all the prayers you continually offer up to God for my intentions with your holy Masses and Communions.

Finally, for I want to pay off all my debts—I wish to thank you for the letters you wrote to me for Christmas 1930—for Christmas 1931—and in case I may forget I would ask you to be good enough to consider this as a preliminary letter containing my good wishes for Christmas 1932!

You have written to me frequently letters that were for me a source of great happiness, and source of courage to do all I could to prepare the way for you, Spouses of Christ, for your arrival in Nigeria.

God is now calling me away from Nigeria but He will continue His own work in Nigeria with the loving co-operation of other bishops, other priests, other Sisters, who will ever come to continue the work begun long long ago by Jesus with Mary and Joseph, and later on by the apostles and their successors. You are now called to step into the ranks of the Apostolic Army—the greatest honour on this earth.

As you pass on to Nigeria and as I, grown old, move away nearer to eternity, I bless you, as we meet and pass each other on the road. Later on we will all meet again never again to be separated.

God ever bless you,

Your affectionate Father in Jesus Christ,

+_Jos. Shanahan, C.S.Sp._
LETTERS TO THE SISTERS AND OTHERS

Templederry, Co. Tipperary.
13th August 1932.

My dear Sister M. Gertrude,
I am down South for a few days but that has not made me forget that you are to make your final profession on the great Festival of Our Lady’s Assumption.
I wish you every blessing on this great event in your religious life. I regret I cannot be with you on the 15th. I will have a very special intention for you at the offering of the holy Sacrifice.
Will you be so good as to remember me in your prayers on that day when Our Lord will grant you all your petitions. Kindly remember me to the Sisters.
God bless you and in His holy name, I too bless you.
I remain, my dear Sister M. Gertrude,
Your affectionate Father in Xsto.,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
2nd October 1932.

My dear Sister Margaret Mary,
I wish you a very happy feast in your new home in Midlothian. Your thoughts will naturally cross back over mountain and sea to the beloved House on the Hill on this special festival so dear to all the Daughters of Our Blessed Lady of the Rosary.
From distant Nigeria and Cork, hearts and minds will turn towards that same shrine where years of heavenly happiness have been spent in preparation for the days of God’s battles waged to win back from a wicked world God’s own poor children.
Although I may not have known you personally as well as I knew the other Sisters who are with you, you are nonetheless equally dear to me. If ever I go to see you at Craiglockhart, then I will have the opportunity of refreshing my memory so that I may never again forget you.
I will be very happy at all times to receive any letter, long or short that you may write to me. If in any way I can be of any assistance to you I will leave nothing undone to give you all the help a Father
can be expected to give to a child he loves, loves with the love of Charity which comes from the Sacred Heart of Christ.

God ever bless you my very dear child. May Our Blessed Lord ever watch over you with St. Joseph and your holy Guardian Angel.

Your affectionate Father in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
3rd October 1932.

My dear Sister M. Columba,

I wish you a very happy feast on the great day of the Patronal Feast of the Congregation, and promise you a special memento in the holy Mass offered on that morning for the Congregation.

I owe a long letter in answer to the many letters you wrote to me, all of which gave me intense happiness. You are never absent from my thoughts and prayers especially at the offering of the holy Sacrifice. This, I believe, the chief and fundamental basis of all true friendship, has existed between the Sisters themselves from the beginning and also between them and the old man who is so honoured by being called by you “Father in Christ”.

I will write again soon for this little note is only an acknowledgment of your very welcome letters—and also an expression of all my good wishes for your continued happiness in your great work as a Missionary Sister in Nigeria.

In a couple of years I hope to have once again the much desired happiness of meeting you with the other Nigerian Sisters in your happy home on the banks of the lordly “Okutanka”. I do love Owerri even though the moon does not shine there as brightly as in Onitsha—I so love to recall the happy moments I spent in your pleasant company.

God ever bless you, my very dear Sister M. Columba. In His name I bless you and remain now as always,

Your affectionate Father in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.
My dear Sister M. Thérèse,

Tomorrow, feast of your glorious patroness, St. Theresa of Avila, I rejoice with you and wish you by the intercession of St. Thérèse an ever closer union with Our Divine Lord, through an ever greater intensification of Faith and Charity in your heart and soul. That this great favour may be granted to you, and with you to all those you love (and you love all those that Jesus Christ loves, beginning with your beloved Sisters in religion), I will offer up for your intentions the holy Sacrifice of the Mass in honour of St. Theresa to the glory of Christ, your heavenly Bridegroom.

The few hours spent in Killeshandra on the great day of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary were happy hours for me; all the happier because of the felt heavenly peace and happiness in the souls of you, daughters of Our Blessed Mother, whom I still love to consider in some small way—even though it be only a pure technicality as Dr. Finnegan called this so-called spiritual paternity of mine—that you are my children, and I your poor old Father from the point of view of your religious life. There is a visible strengthening and deepening of the spiritual life in all. You are growing into fully armed soldiers of Christ through the ineffable love Our Lord and His Blessed Mother have for you: all of which means for me some small participation in the joy and happiness that fill your hearts and souls . . .

I was sorry I could not go back to spend a day or two with you. In addition to my passing infirmity I felt it would not be good to impose on you because of the genuine warm welcome I know you have for me.

Dr. Finnegan was well able to carry out the dedication I was to have done for him. He brought me along with him in his car on his way to Dublin on Monday. The following day I called to see Dr. Magennis. He gave me a warm welcome—such as he gives to all Nigerians or Africans. In addition he stuck right into my knee a most merciless needle filled with some awful stuff. Meanwhile he was lost in raptures over the Eucharistic Congress. I couldn’t trouble the pious man telling me all about the men’s meeting in the Park, and at the same time forcing his needle deeper and deeper.
into my knee. My feelings were very mixed. Violent expletives were gradually moving upwards towards my lips—an explosion seemed imminent. When he paused to ask me if I remembered the words of the great Cardinal Legate . . . “For heaven’s sake”, said I, “Will you remember you have a . . . 12-inch needle with a pint of vitriol planted right in the centre of my being! . . .”.

After about five minutes I forgave him—even though he did laugh to his heart’s content at the brave warrior missioner complaining of a pin-prick.

It seems there’s nothing wrong with me beyond an attack of rheumatic-arthritis or something like that. I’m being treated for it. Miss Ryan—Anne—Mother M. Brigid’s good sister, is doing the good Samaritan for me. She comes out to Blackrock every other day to attend to my contrary points. The whole thing was brought about by my own negligence. I’ve got to remember I’m in Ireland. That knee will be a good reminder of that particular fact.

I’m getting back to my books—and, please God, to the quiet solitude exterior and interior, where peace is to be found. Every day I thank God more fervently for the present situation in which He has placed me. Of course I richly deserve it but now I know He wants me to make good use of it and so make amends for the past.

How good God is to each one of us! How often I have read this special note of gratitude in those delightful letters you used to write to me. The dinner bell is gone—and you know there is no resisting its call on a cold day like this. In addition the mail is going—oh, those wretched excuses!—

With all the old time affection, grown stronger now with a better knowledge of God’s beauty and of the beauty He imparts to the souls He loves and who love Him in return,

I remain, my dear Sister M. Thérèse,

Your ever affectionate Father in Christ,


P.S.—If you have a few Mass intentions to dispose of will you send them to me, and oblige very much.—J. S.
Blackrock College, Dublin.
29th November 1932.

Dear Sister M. Columba,

I wish you a very happy Xmas, a happy New Year and many happy returns. I hope you are very well. You are never absent from my thoughts and prayers. On Xmas Day I am offering up a Mass for the Sisters in Nigeria. I am ever so much better now and hope to be alright by Xmas.

I send you a very special blessing and hope to write later on at greater length. The Xmas wish comprises all one heart has to say to another.

God ever bless you my very dear child and Sister.

Your affectionate Father in Xsto.,

+ JOS. SHANAHAN.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
Christmas Eve 1932.

My dear Sister M. Gerard,

I wish you a very happy Xmas, a holy New Year with many happy returns. Many thanks for your very kind Xmas greetings. I am so sorry I cannot be with you for at least a day during the Xmas holidays. I'm not well but hope to be better soon.

Won’t you excuse this very short note, but my good wishes for you and my prayers are as earnest and as sincere as ever. It will be a pleasure to meet Miss Short. Kindly remember me to her.

God bless you. I too bless you in His holy name.

Your affectionate Father in Xsto.,

JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Larine, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.
30th December 1932.

My dear Sister M. Gerard,

My very dear child you are dearer than ever to me on account of that letter you have just written to me telling me, as only a friend can tell a friend—and how grateful I am to you for this particular
evidence of genuine friendship—of that dream you had concerning me. I am a great believer in dreams. And your dream was based on actual reality. Seldom in my life had I been so near death as I was up to a few days before Xmas—and I didn't know anything of this. It was only when the crisis was over that I was told. I would like you not to mention this to anybody. I am so tired of being "a sick man". But I must mention it to you and of course to Sister M. John and Sister M. Paul. It need not go beyond you. Your prayers with the tears you shed for me—and I know I have had the prayers of every Sister of the Holy Rosary Congregation—obtained for me a prolongation of my lease of life. How thankful I am for this gift God has given me in answer to the prayers of those He loves so dearly because they love Him so intensely. And I need those prayers more than ever. Thank God we have another Holy Year during which I at any rate can make a final squaring up of all my accounts with God. How good God is to grant me this favour! As you see I am rapidly getting better. At long last I feel I am over this long, long, wearying attack. Miss Short called over to see me just before she went back to Cork. She very kindly gave me all the latest news of you and all in the Mercy Hospital. Needless to say it was all excellent news. I love to hear people mention the names of our Sisters in Cork.

This is only a short and hurried note. Later on I will write when I am altogether well. I wish you a very happy, holy New Year. The same wish I ask you to convey to the Sisters. All in Killeshandra write to me most beautiful letters. They are all saints up there. Mother Aquinas wrote and so did Mother Dominic, and of course Mother Brigid, Sister M. Therese, Sister M. Peter, etc. etc. Mother Xavier sent me a lovely little Christmas box. God bless her and all in dear Killeshandra. The Sisters in Nigeria wrote to me letters that brought tears to my eyes. They got their letters just in time for Xmas Day. What a source of happiness for me is all this!

God bless you my dear Sister M. Gerard.

With all kind remembrances to the Sisters,
I am,

Your grateful & affectionate Father in Christ,

+JOS. I. SHANAHAN.

P.S.—I was able to celebrate holy Mass—one only—one Christmas
night. What a happiness! You were all with me around Our Lord—in
the holy chalice and on the sacred table. On New Year’s Day
I will again celebrate. I have celebrated only once since the 7th
December, but from New Year’s Day on I will celebrate daily.—J. S.

Clareville, Blackrock College.
28th February 1933.

My dear Sister M. Columba,

I hear you have abandoned Emekuku and are now heart and soul
at work in Onitsha. Much as you love Onitsha I feel certain that you
have a warm corner in your heart for Emekuku. Even the sight of
the royal glorious “Red” causes a more rapid pulse of your heart—
is not “Red” the colour of Emekuku?

How are you? Won’t you write and tell me. You know the
pleasure a letter from you gives me—not because of all the news
but because of yourself, a fellow missioner in Nigeria. It doesn’t
matter what way the moon does herself up here in Ireland, it is not
the same moon you and I know away over the palm trees in dear old
Nigeria. The charms of Spring are here and, no doubt, they are
bewitching, but not for me. I look at them only to fly off to that only
charming beautiful country in the world: Nigeria. A letter from
you, from any of the Sisters or Fathers contains for me the voice
and heart of Nigeria. Strange to say I thought Our Lord Himself
nearer to me in Nigeria. The continued miracle of the visible effects
of His Divine Grace in ourselves and in all those poor children of
Christ in Nigeria made His Divine Presence more like what it was
when He was a Missioner in Judea.

Sister M. Dominic and her three companions will have all the
news of Killeshandra and Ireland for you. They will be with you
before Easter. (Already a year since I left Nigeria.) They will bring
you whatever little news there may be about all the rest of us that
interests you. And there are many now here from Nigeria. Father
Whyte will be as good as a yearly edition of all the newspapers in
one. He will supplement the Sisters’ limited news.

In Killeshandra all are happy, and hard at work as ever bringing
their whole life into absolute conformity with the life of Jesus Christ,
so that He alone will live in each of them.
As for me, more than ever, I live my life for you, my very dear children in Christ. This is my great happiness and consolation—that in doing this I am still doing some little thing for Christ, for you, for Nigeria.

God bless you, my very dear Sister M. Columba. Won't you continue to pray for me.

Your very affectionate Father in Christ,


Blackrock College.
18th March 1933.

My dear Sister M. Gerard,

Are not those first days in Spring glorious? And the sun? I have all the trouble in the world to resist the temptation that's urging me to run down to Cork. But there's Lent and its regulations! All the same, if the temptation continues to urge I'll go down to Cork to see ... Dr. Broderick ... and when I'm there maybe you might be tempted to overlook the regulation—as an exception—and see me if only for a short time.

How are you? ... I am afraid I'll have to go and see for myself.

I am back again to almost normal health. How thankful I am to God for this great gift of health. And after God how grateful I am to all of you for the prayers you have been continually offering up to God for me. You can understand how well I am from the fact that I was out in Dublin lately to see three Rugby matches. While looking out I could not but picture myself as you saw me depicted some time ago in that famous book in Onitsha. You know I have barely recovered from the shock that picture gave me. And to make matters worse you were there breaking your sides laughing at me!

God bless you my very dear child and Sister, and may He ever keep His holy joy in your heart and soul and enable you, in the future as in the past, to communicate the happiness of your own soul to those that come in contact with you. You are never absent from my prayers. My last act at night is to bless each of you in Killeshandra, Cork, Scotland and Nigeria. The thought of you fills
this old heart of mine with a joy that has nothing else like it. . . . it surely comes from God. And how grateful I am to God for it!

I am, my dear Sister M. Gerard,
Your ever affectionate Father in Xto.,
+JOS. SHANAHAN.

No address and no date on this note but was with the 1933 letters.

Dear Sister M. Columba,

Will you please hand the enclosed photo to Sister M. Felim Aloysius. It is for the community so that they may see Dr. Porter and myself with the Archbishop of Liverpool, Dr. Downey. It was taken on the occasion of the Consecration of Dr. Porter, formerly in Asaba, later on in N. Nigeria and now Bishop of the Gold Coast.

J. S.

II. This evening at 8 p.m. I am to attend a Bridge Tournament held in the Gresham Hotel for the convent in Killeshandra. There is an elaborate and distinguished committee of no less than 77 ladies whose names appear on the Invitation to see that the Hall at the Gresham is full and with people who have their pockets full of money!

I saw Rev. Father Harrington since his return. He told me wonderful things about the Sisters in Onitsha and Emeke. Father Whitney came also to give me the latest news about you. How delightful it is to meet those who have met you in Nigeria.

Goodbye again,

J. S.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
23rd Oct. 1933.

My dear Sister M. John,

How welcome your letter was. And now the news partly sad because it announces a parting from your first Mission field, and all partings are sad, but also full of the promise of greater and happier days though maybe harder work in a harder climate but what matter so long as it is Nigeria. Returning to Killeshandra
means you are on the way to Nigeria—and maybe I'd be with you and Sister M. Gerard!

I must call to see you and all in the Mercy Hospital before you leave it. Poor Sister M. Paul will feel so lonely. It will be a duty for me henceforth to go to Cork no matter what may be thought of it. I'm afraid I am far from complete conversion and still further from detachment from those I love.

I am very well and off to Carlow just now. Tell Sister M. Gerard I will write to her when I get back. Of course she is so absolutely indifferent to all persons and things on this poor earth of ours that she won't mind whether I write or not, but I'll write just for my own personal satisfaction.

If only I could manage to give you another good ride in the old “Nigerian Isis”.

God bless you and all.

I am, my dear Sister M. John,
Your affectionate Father in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
27th November 1933.

My dear Sister M. Columba,

I wish you a very happy Christmas followed by a holy New Year with many happy returns of both.

This last year has been a year of great sorrow for you, of sorrow generously accepted in union with the Great Loving Heart of the Man of Sorrows and of His Blessed Mother.

Every letter that came to me from Nigeria contained sentiments of most beautiful sisterly sympathy for you. I was asked to remember you and those dear departed ones you still continue to love, in all my prayers and Masses. Although I never wrote to you, you were seldom out of my mind and never out of my prayers and Holy Mass.

My mental picture of you goes back to the parlour in Kille-shandra. How well I recollect the little talks we had together; how can I forget your patience and fortitude when, young soldier as you were then, soldier of Christ in training, you felt the hardships but manfully faced and overcame them.

Later on I see you with Sister M. Felim Aloysius walking up
and down the little walks in Emekuku. How lonely you often seemed to be, to my mind at all events, and how courageous you must have been to continue on bravely going through those first hard days of every young missionary's career in Africa. God permits all this that the love of His soldiers might be tested and purified by the fiery ordeal of the cross. I still remember how I used to pray for you, for both of you, as I caught a glimpse of you in the gathering gloom of that after-sunset hour in Emekuku convent grounds. And now all that gloom has passed away and you are still at the work assigned to you by God, fearless and generous, with your heart and mind more detached than ever from things and persons on this earth but more firmly and lovingly united to the Great Heart of Him whose consecrated spouse you are. Trust Him, love Him, with unlimited trust and love. He will continue to fill your heart and soul to overflowing with His own Divine Self.

God bless you, my dear Sister M. Columba.

Your ever affectionate Father in Christ,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
20th April 1934.

My dear Mrs. Ryan,

I am deeply grateful to you, to Pat, May and Joe for that most consoling letter of sympathy you have written to me on the occasion of poor May Dawson’s death. Mrs. Dawson while feeling all the sorrow ever associated with the death of those we love is blessed in the consolation derived from the possession of Faith and absolute trust in and love of Holy Providence. She knows that since God loves with a passionate love—if I may venture to use the expression—He does for each of us what is best in order to bring our souls to Himself in Heaven. This He has done for May—so blessed be His Holy Will.

I cannot forget your kind remembrance of me and of those I love on this day of great sorrow. I thank you and Pat and May and Joe from the bottom of my heart. God ever bless you and console you in all your sorrow.

I remain, dear Mrs. Ryan,

Sincerely yours,

+Jos. Shanahan.
Blackrock College, Dublin.
30th June 1934.

My dear Sister M. Assumpta,

Your letter announcing the great good news of your holy profession on the 9th August filled my heart with joy. You with your ten Sister companions are to be united to Christ in holy espousals! What an exceptional grace and privilege this is. No wonder your heart is replete with happiness: no wonder you wish your friends far and near to join with you in thanking God, to share with you in your heavenly happiness.

While thanking you for remembering me in your prayers I will ask you to be good enough to give me a special remembrance on that day. On my side I will continue to pray for you and all even more earnestly—if that were possible—then in the past, especially at the offering of the holy Sacrifice, that you and all may be faithful, loving, fearless spouses of Christ, true to Him to death.

God bless you, my very dear Sister M. Assumpta. May His divine Life and Love ever increase more and more in your heart and soul. In His holy name receive from the depths of my heart the blessing of Your Father in Jesus Christ,

JOS. SHANAHAN.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
8th July 1934.

My dear Sister M. John,

Now you are in Africa! Our Lord has granted you your great wish: live with Him, labour and suffer with Him in Africa all through the love of Him and of His very dear brown children.

I’m certain you find Him closer to you than ever and more lovable. No matter even though the Cross, His cross, your own poor body does seem a little more difficult to carry. He will help you over the dangerous and difficult passages. Love Him and trust Him with love and trust unbounded. He will never see you in distress without making you feel all at once that He is there—the very centre of your own heart and soul.

How I thank Him for having so beautifully arranged for you with
all the other Sisters ever since that first day when He said to you: “Follow Me”. You followed Him, attracted by that divinely appealing voice of His. Your heart could not resist it, and now you are at Emekuku? . . . This time last year you were in Cork. A little later on we had that last glorious drive in the dear old “Isis”. Look at all that has happened since then but all beautifully arranged by Holy Providence.

Your departure from Liverpool filled the upper part of my soul and my heart with untold gladness: God’s apostles sailing away to Africa—but also I felt ever so lonely—why, it hasn’t left me yet, that desperate loneliness—I feel more than ever an exile . . . but it is God’s holy will . . . Those letters you wrote to me all along the voyage were as a breath of my old African home to me—I can never thank God here below sufficiently for being in some small way associated with Him in even seeing you off. I always see Him too there in the midst of you, just as He was wont to be with His own, long, long ago when crossing over the lakes of His native land, His apostles rowing the boat.

I am so happy to know you are all now hard at work in your own communities and happy. God ever keep you close to His Heart.

Next year I will be with you, please God, what a day that will be when I meet all of my own children—black and white in Nigeria! I am happier than ever I have been in my life. These little odds and ends of difficulties that you know of were sent by God for my soul’s sake and they were among the greatest blessings I received in the shape of little crosses. I now know what God wants of me—How glad I am to know and how willingly I accept. He knows, for it is He has arranged everything. But I will still continue to live for my own dear children in Killeshandra a life of prayer—that and that alone God wants me to do for you. How happy I am to do it. I know that He will see that all your spiritual and temporal needs are well arranged for. Write to me sometimes—just when you have a spare moment—and a few lines to say how you are.

Remember me to Dr. Korte. I hope to write to her later on.

God bless you, dear Sister M. John,

Your Father in Xto.,

+Jos. Shanahan.
Blackrock College, Dublin.
19th September 1934.

My dear Rev. Mother,

My first letter to you as 1st Rev. Mother of the Holy Rosary Convent! And it is to accept with exceptional pleasure your kind invitation to call and say Mass for the Sisters.

I hope to get to Killeshandra on Saturday and so have the happiness of spending a few hours with you and all the Sisters on Sunday.

The Retreat is over! God did grant me very exceptional help during these days that meant so much for those future priests to whom the Holy Ghost sent me as His instrument to speak the Words of Life that He alone could and would suggest. I had—on not a few occasions, to leave the whole conference to be suggested to me by Him at the prayer of Our Blessed Mother ... Killeshandra in praying for me always is my mainstay in all the difficult problems I have to face—I always say, "Well, I know I have but little credit—but what about Killeshandra? Won't you listen, O Good Mother Mary to your own daughters of the Holy Rosary?" And she always does listen and sees me always over the bad and otherwise impassible spots ... 

I am overjoyed at the thought of meeting you and all the Sisters on Saturday next. How good God is! What do we not owe Him, each and all of us His poor missionaries.

God bless you. You know you are always remembered in my prayers.

I am, my dear Rev. Mother,
Ever devotedly in Xsto.,

+J. SHANAHAN.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
27th November 1934.

My dear Sister M. John,

Your first Christmas in Nigeria! How I wish you to be happy with that very special happiness Jesus Christ grants to His own, so very generously, on this great anniversary of His own coming among us. You too have renounced all that was ever dear to you
for His sake and for the sake of His Nigerian children.

Ask Him for the wonderful gift of an almost infinite and tender love for, and confidence in Him in return for His love to you and for you. He will refuse nothing to His own consecrated spouses and out in Nigeria too!

How are you? How do you like Nigeria? I have written but seldom—I thought it better not to write until the period of transition had passed away. That does not mean that I do not take the very same interest in you and each of the Sisters that I did from the very beginning. But now my prayers only are needed, for Holy Providence has so beautifully arranged matters that your beloved Congregation is now a completely and perfectly organised Society with its own government, a full grown religious family among the great religious and missionary families of the Church. How happy I am to have lived to see this with my own eyes!

Your own Superior General will soon be with you in Nigeria—won’t that be a great day when you meet Rev. Mother General in your own convent in Nigeria!

She was suffering severely from ear trouble but now after a most successful operation she is alright and fit for Nigeria. She thinks only of Nigeria and of each and all of you.

You know that poor Mother Gerard has been ill and had to undergo a serious operation. She will soon be better than ever she had been, since the cause of the trouble is removed. I saw Sister M. Paul first, the first time since last year. She is very well and happy. She hopes to go to Nigeria soon. We had a few minutes to talk of Cork where you spent many hard though most useful and blessed days. In Killeshandra everything is going on exceptionally well. There is a note of great happiness prevalent in the very atmosphere of the place. Their new home is beautiful in its simplicity . . .

News came quite recently that you had not been so well. I hope you are perfectly fit by this time. This hospital business will take some time to get set up and started. The pioneers in important works of this nature have to put up with many difficulties. I have some experience of those difficulties. And that explains why I will have a very particular remembrance of you at the offering of the holy Sacrifice: that God may enable you to continue to bear with patience and fortitude the endless difficulties you must inevitably meet with at this initial stage of the starting of that most important and
delicate task: the creation of a new hospital.

During the coming year I hope to have the happiness of meeting you in Nigeria. How I look forward to seeing it again. It is difficult for me to think of anything else but unalloyed happiness during the years I spent in Nigeria. And there were days and months and years when I found life in Nigeria with its trials and crosses anything but pleasant. Of all that, nothing remains today but a sense of intense gratitude to God for every moment of my life in Nigeria: the good days and bad days were part and parcel of God’s plan for the little bit of work I had to do with Him and for Him. Now that all is over I can only remember the good days. For what I thought were hard and bad days were mixed among the best. Only now do I see it all—and I long to go back and thank God when I get there for everything . . .

God bless you my dear Sister M. John,
Your ever affectionate Father in Xsto.,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
4th March 1935.

Dear Mrs. Frame,

Many thanks for your very kind letter and for your invitation to see you and Davie and all the family in your new home: Tramore House. It will be a great pleasure for me to meet you all again. I could not tell you how glad I was to meet Davie in London. The meeting was so unexpected—and yet although I knew Davie but for a short time there are few friends I would rather meet than his own good self. There is a ring of genuine sincere warm friendship in him that makes an irresistible appeal to me. You may depend upon Davie’s keeping his promise to God. He will be just as straight in his dealings with Him as he is straight in his dealings with men.

As soon as I can possibly manage it I will go down and spend an evening with you and Davie. I’ll get in touch with you over the phone and arrange for an evening that will suit.

Tomorrow evening the Sisters for Nigeria are crossing over to Liverpool and I’m crossing over too to see them on the boat at Liverpool and give them a last blessing as they sail down the Mersey,
off to Africa! . . .

When I got your phone call on Saturday I would have been delighted to go with you and Davie to Killeshandra on Sunday but I had written that I would not, could not, manage to go—and they did not expect me, having arranged to meet me here in Dunlaoghaire at Mother Xavier’s Convent on Tuesday—tomorrow.

Lent will soon be over—please God we will spend some fine Summer’s day in Killeshandra after Easter when the days are long and the weather beautiful.

I am not going to Nigeria this year. The voyage is postponed indefinitely.

And the news about poor Bobbie! I can hardly believe it. He was so strong . . . Well! God’s Holy Will be done. Is it not grand to think of Heaven and Eternal Life and the Resurrection of the Body in Eternal Life—no more sickness—or sorrow—or death—or separation either from God or from those we love. God who loves each one of us with a most tender passionate love (if I may so express the love of a loving Father and Mother for a beloved child)—will do what He knows to be best for your dear Bobbie’s eternal happiness. It is eternity that matters. And God wants all of us, His children, to be happy with Himself above in the home He has prepared for us in Heaven. A few days more or less below in this place of pilgrimage matters but little when compared with Eternity.

Asking you to convey my warmest sentiments of friendship and good wishes to Davie; and assuring your own good self that I do not forget at the offering of the Holy Sacrifice to remember you and all those petitions which hold such a central place in your heart and life. I pray for both of you.

May God grant you the grace to see fully realised here below on this earth the greatest and dearest wish of your heart—it is also I know the great wish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Have confidence; this crowning grace and happiness will be granted to you and to him whom you love so dearly. You will kneel side by side one day at the same altar to receive the same Divine Bread which makes us all one with Jesus Christ, one with each other.

Very sincerely yours,

+Jos. Shanahan.
My dear Sister M. Assumpta,

A hurried line to wish you a very happy St. Patrick’s Day and St. Joseph’s Day with blessings untold from both great saints. Also I want to tell you how delighted I was to see you in your temporary home at Muckross Hostel. I felt as I used to feel long ago in Nigeria when calling in at one of the Stations away in the Bush to see some poor missionary in his solitude.

So it was a real happiness for me as indeed I know it was for you—for both of us—now fellow missionaries to meet and spend a few minutes together.

I will pray very specially for you—for you are so much alone—even though you are with religious, and of the best—that Our Lord may fill your heart and soul with the felt experience of His holy presence.

I am saying Mass on St. Patrick’s and St. Joseph’s Day for the Holy Rosary Sisters. You will have a special mention, alongside Mother Superior—the travellers—the Craiglockhart Srs. and Nigeria with Killeshandra.

God bless and protect you in your great work, my very dear child and Sister,

Your affectionate Father in Xto.,


P.S.—I’m off to Rockwell just now for St. Patrick’s Day.—J. S.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
15th May 1935.

My dear Sister M. Assumpta,

Tomorrow, Thursday, I will call to see you at Muckross so that we may have a talk over your dear young brother’s future.

I am so glad to see you take such keen interest in Bernard. I owe much to the deep loving interest taken in me long years ago by my own sister when I was a mere boy. And ever since, her influence for all that’s best over me has never waned. So I know the treasures of
goodness God has stored up in the hearts of sisters for the spiritual welfare of their brothers. It is therefore a twofold pleasure for me to do what I can to help you in every effort you make for the furtherance of Bernard’s vocation for the religious life—and maybe—should it be God’s holy will—the Sacerdotal vocation.

When I call tomorrow since it is for a purely and personal private matter connected with Bernard I do not intend to meet dear Rev. Mother Prioress and the Community; that can remain over for another day.

Many thanks for your letter and all the lovely things your kind heart suggests. I deserve no thanks at all. For in visiting you I am visiting a fellow missionary, as well as a most dear child in religion and in Christ. That for me is indeed a source of great spiritual happiness.

I spent a day in Killeshandra; all are very well and very happy there. From Killeshandra I went to Letterkenny where I stayed with an old Nigerian missionary—Rev. Father MacGinley. I saw some of the most historic spots in all Ireland—including the birthplace of St. Columba and St. Eunan. I will tell you about it all when I meet you tomorrow. I returned to Dublin on Monday evening.

God bless you my dear Sister M. Assumpta.

Your ever affectionate Father in Xsto.,

+jos. shahanah, C.S.Sp.

P.S.—In case I forget . . . anytime on Saturday will suit me. We can see what time will suit your father and Bernard best.—J. S.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
5th October 1935.

Rev. and dear Mother M. Gerard,

I wish you and the Community a very happy feastday on the 7th—feast of our Blessed Mother Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary and Queen and Mother of her new Congregation of daughters, her Missionary Sisters in Killeshandra and Nigeria—and now also on the high seas and in Scotland.

I will offer up the holy Sacrifice for the intention of the Con-
gregation on the seventh.

You will have heard from the travellers any little details that will interest you. I still feel lonely, just as I felt, standing on the Prince’s landing stage as the ACCRA moved away and gradually faded out of sight down the Mersey.

The last thoughts and words of the Sisters were concerning their beloved home and their Sisters in Killeshandra. They were one in heart and spirit with all those who have preceded them to Nigeria as with all those who are now in Killeshandra but hope to follow them one day.

They bore with splendid fortitude the dreadful strain of those last days in Ireland.

I hope you got back safely to Killeshandra—also that the Profession which was to have taken place today has passed off quietly. You all need a rest now after so many months’ retreats, receptions, professions, preparing for departing missionaries, without counting a constant stream of visitors. I can easily realise your longing for solitude, all alone to yourself with Our Lord.

I will follow your example and try and keep to my room here with my books and with Our Lord. I too am tired of all the travelling about during those three months that have just elapsed.

I enjoyed that week with you in Killeshandra more than I could tell. But I was especially happy to see that your health is getting better and better as weeks go by.

Nothing more for the present. Recommending myself to your prayers and to the prayers of the community,

I am, my dear Rev. Mother Gerard,

Ever sincerely yours in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Blackrock College.
30th October 1935.

My dear Rev. Mother,

I am to sail for Nigeria in a few days, a fortnight at the latest. Dr. Heerey has sent me a pressing invitation, the second or third since last year—but this is final and definite—to be present at the jubilee celebrations in Onitsha.
I need not tell you how happy I am and how grateful to God—and after God, to Dr. Heerey.

I will call to see you and all in Killeshandra before I sail once again for that beloved old home on the banks of the Niger. It might have been more pleasant to have been along with some fellow missionary priests or Sisters—but since God has arranged to have me travel all alone I am quite happy about that too.

To you and to all I send a blessing with all affectionate good wishes,

Very sincerely in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

On board the R.M.S. ADDA.
17th November 1935.

My dear Sister Margaret Mary,

No letter gave me greater pleasure than yours. It was so good of you to write to me and such a charming letter. I think of you very often and pray for you because you are suffering and need so much a continuation of all those graces which God is bestowing on you so generously. I was so happy to see you in every way reconciled to God’s holy will.

I hope that operation you were to undergo has been a complete success. Please God you will soon be restored to perfect health—if such is God’s holy will. Continue to sanctify yourself in your present state of health, accepting it all as a loving expression of God’s holy will for your sanctification—and all for Nigeria. I ask you my child to give me a special remembrance in your prayers. I ask Our Lord to grant you the strength you need to sail down over these seas I now sail over on your way to Nigeria.

We are leaving the cold and gloomy North behind us—already the light and heat of the tropics are being felt—tomorrow, Monday, we will be in Madeira.

There are four priests on board. That makes the voyage to be very happy. We have several Masses each morning. The ship is rolling so heavily that it is difficult to say Mass. There is a particular happiness in saying Mass on board a ship. It always reminds me of those voyages of Our Lord over the Sea of Galilee with His apostles.
He was a great lover of the sea and of boats and of fishermen. He loved all the works of His heavenly Father. He gradually gives to each one of His missionaries to see persons and things in the loving, lovable light in which He saw them and loved them. The whole world changes and becomes so beautiful when seen and loved with eyes and heart animated with a soul where God dwells.

Writing on a ship is very difficult—there are people all about talking and laughing and happy. It is hard to forget and shut out such an environment. But walking up and down the deck my thoughts are free to roam the earth and the stars and beyond the stars even—then do I think of all of you in Killeshandra and Nigeria—and St. Vincent's Hospital.

God bless you, my dear Sister. I will continue to pray for you very specially asking God to grant you complete restoration to health.

Your ever affectionate Father in Xto.,

+JOS. SHAHANAH, C.S.Sp.

On board the R.M.S. ADDA.
17th November 1935.

My dear Mother Brigid,

You with many of the Sisters gave me a pleasant surprise in writing to me to Liverpool. The Sisters in Scotland wrote also, nor did the poor Sisters in St. Vincent's Hospital forget. Finally, was it not delightful for me to receive letters from the Sisters in Nigeria—including a glorious letter from Rev. Mother General. They were handed to me at the door as I was setting out from Blackrock College. So I had the whole Congregation with me all thanking God for this further kindness to an old missionary. In each letter, in each kindly wish, in each kindly expression of prayerful God-speed is not the tenderness of God's own gentle Fatherly Heart to be found: for all comes from Him, inspired by Him—but in loving co-operation with Him.

And so my voyage—this strange voyage of mine over the seas once more is for me something in the nature of a charming gift from God, obtained for me, I am convinced, through the prayers of my fellow missionaries: the Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary.
Pardon me for referring so very frequently to this very subject: if I do it is because I am convinced that all missionaries should have unbounded confidence in God’s holy Providence, especially in the midst of grave temptation: serious difficulties of no matter what nature; when all one’s wishes and efforts seem to be futile as regards results, when failure seems marked on our whole being, in its every activity. A cheerful, loving trust in Providence will carry every missionary over the most difficult passages of the missionary road to heaven. One has to keep on looking right over the difficulties up to that Light that is ever to be found illuminating the summit of one’s own soul—that dawn of the Eternal Light which will illuminate heaven.

Such are the thoughts that run in streams through my mind as we sail down, ever nearer and nearer to Africa—of all that has happened since that first voyage in 1902 nothing remains in my mind and heart except all that’s beautiful and lovable—another great grace God gives to His missionaries, a grace that fills the soul with intense happiness. The missionary life, the mission itself, the Congregation, the whole Church seem to blend into one glory of light and life and eternal possession of that Light and Life in the clear vision of it all. Never did I feel happy as I do now—even though I were not to spend six months in Nigeria. At long, long last now that the Holy Rosary Sisters have obtained for me this great favour I feel finally detached from all I ever loved while loving it all with a love more intense than I ever loved it heretofore.

And now to our voyage and my fellow-travellers—there are four priests on board with me: three of the Society of the African Missions, Cork and one belonging to Father Whitney’s Mission, Calabar.

They are all very young and very happy. We are of course all together at table and near each other in our cabins. It makes the voyage to be very pleasant indeed.

Of the passengers all I know is what I see—they keep very much aloof from us. I don’t know any of them except one. Yet they are all very friendly in their own peculiar distant, respectful way—yet all is different from what it used to be . . . The Captain and officers, stewards, etc. are all charming. There is an altar on board, attended to by the second steward.

The sea has been lumpy, humpy, bumpy, roly, etc. etc. from the
very beginning of the voyage. It is difficult to say Mass. There is a
dlarge crowd on board and consequently very little spare room. The
weather so far has been cold and dank—today at last the temperature
is changing. Tomorrow we are to be in Madeira.

While I write there is all around a crowd waiting for me to yield
my place at the writing table. You know what it is to attempt to
write a letter in such an atmosphere.

But you know also that the writing does not really much matter
provided we know that the writer and those he is writing to under-
stand each other—understand the sea and those that sail over it.

The sea has lost nothing of its enchantment for me—I spend
hours walking up and down the deck looking away out over the
horizon, up and down the world my mind roams; and away down
the years it travels to those who first sailed over this self-same ocean.
How I wish they all had known God! How I now pray that all those
who sail over it may know Him—and then my mind stops in Nigeria
only to go back again to Killeshandra, finally to travel away beyond
the stars where we shall all travel once, there to meet and never
again to be separated—to meet and stay with Our Father in our
Father’s home.

When I reach Nigeria then will I write to you something more
concrete and tangible and personal than what I am now writing.

How I pray for you—all of you who are to sail this same ocean
for God knows how many years on your way to Africa and to
heaven. May your hearts and souls be replete with heavenly peace
and happiness and trust in God during those glorious days of your
apostolate. I bless every day the sea over which you are to sail—
and it is God who is blessing it. It is His own big sea. He will look
after His children when they sail over it. He will be with them.
And now I have reached the very end of what’s in my mind just now.
So I leave you as far as writing is concerned—my next letter will be
from Nigeria.

Tomorrow, though, I cannot but recall that sunny day years ago
when you and I with Dr. Leen got off the ship to have that great
motor drive to the highest point in Madeira—how well I recall every
incident of that voyage! We are to spend a few hours at Madeira,
to land passengers. Won’t you remember me to all in the community
and to the novices and postulants.

To each and all I send a very special blessing.
LETTERS TO THE SISTERS AND OTHERS

God bless you, my dear Mother Brigid. With all kindliest good wishes to you and to all,

Your ever affectionate Father in Xst.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

On board the R.M.S. ADDA.
17th November 1935.

My dear Sister M. Gertrude,

We are near Madeira leaving the cold harsh dark North behind us and entering gradually into the light and heat of the Sunny South.

There are four priests on board so we have a very happy party. They are all quite young and on their way to Nigeria too. My next letter to you will be from Nigeria. Please God, you and many other Sisters will sail down this same sea in a short time and maybe I will have the happiness of meeting you in Nigeria. Meanwhile I have the happiness of praying for you each day—especially at the holy Sacrifice—recommending you, one and all in Craiglockhart, Killeshandra, St. Vincent’s and Nigeria—to God.

May God bless you on those many voyages which you in your turn will undertake in fulfilment of your great apostolic vocation. How often I think of Our Lord and His apostles on those voyages of theirs together over the sea of Galilee. Today He is here with His missionaries just as He was with His apostles. To meet Him each morning at the holy Sacrifice is an ineffable consolation and joy. And to meet him in Nigeria! What a consolation and happiness!

Ever the same living, loving Jesus. Is it any wonder His missionaries are happy. He pours into their hearts and souls His own very happiness: His own very Self each morning at the sacred moment of Communion.

Kindly remember me to each of the Sisters in Craiglockhart. I pray that God may grant you special graces to do the hard but most important work you are now doing in preparation for your active missionary career in Nigeria.

Writing on board a ship is almost impossible, so pardon this illegible, jumble of words and thoughts. At least they will tell you I am ever thinking of and praying for each of you my very dear missionary Sisters.
God bless you one and all in Scotland as well as in Ireland and Nigeria.

Your ever affectionate Father in Xto.,


P.S.—As I was leaving Ireland I received a most interesting letter from your great missionary brother in Nigeria. He was ever so well—and now I will call to see him—and so answer his letter.

On board the R.M.S. APAPA.

Freetown.

27th January 1936.

Dear Sister M. John,

How good of you to send me that surprise letter handed to me on the sea.

In return I want to send you from Freetown, our last port of call, a final farewell from Africa.

I felt so happy at meeting you—even for a few minutes only—in Nigeria . . . and so lonely coming away . . .

Father Mackey has come here to take us out to see the Bishop and the mission so I must go—but you know that now more than ever I shall live with you in your life of hard work for Christ in Nigeria—live with you in spirit and heart and thoughts.

I will write more frequently were it only a few lines to you and to all the Sisters. We are very well.

God bless you, my dear Sister John. With all good wishes,

Your ever affectionate Father in Xto.,


Blackrock College.

St. Patrick’s Day 1936.

My dear Sister M. John,

Your letter just received gave me great pleasure. Thanks for your wishes so sincere and for the promise of prayers and Holy Communion and Holy Mass remembrances of me. On my side, I shall
never forget you and the great work of mercy you are engaged in.

Rome in the person of our Holy Father, the Pope has just set
its seal on this grand work of mercy for God’s poor suffering
children, for mothers and children more especially . . .

I am so glad to know you are happy in that great Apostolic
portion of God’s work assigned to you. How great was Our Lord’s
love for those that suffer. He loved to meet and restore them to
health. In you the poor Nigerians meet our good Lord continuing
His work of healing and assuaging human suffering in order thereby
to heal and assuage the sorrows and sickness of the soul.

I bless you and send a blessing to all those working with you in
the hospital.

To all my sincerest good wishes and affection.

Your ever affectionate Father in Xsto.,


Blackrock College.
Good Friday 1936.

My dear Sister M. Gabriel,

I thank you for your very kind Easter wishes and for your
remembrance of me in your prayers. There is nothing I appreciate
so much as the assurance of being remembered by those I love
when they stand in God’s holy Presence. An audience with our
Holy Father is a thrilling moment never to be forgotten. Such an
audience as dear Rev. Mother General, with Mother Brigid and
Mother Therese have just had with our most Holy Father in Rome.

How on those occasions we remember those whom we love, and ask
blessings for them, blessings that are ever granted and received. We
almost forget that we can have at any moment a personal audience
with Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist and at the offering of the
holy Sacrifice! Won’t you continue to remember me—as I will
remember you—at those blessed audiences with Him who on
this day died for the love of us, while dying first of all for the
restoration of the honour and glory due to His heavenly Father . . .

How can we think of anyone else than that Jesus on a day like this—
if only we could get the whole world to meet Him and have an
audience with Him. Ah, how they too would love to be with Him,
to speak to Him, to go and call others to come with them to see and know and love Him . . .

May God Our Father and Our Lord Jesus Christ fill to overflowing your heart and soul with His love, and kindle in it that divine apostolic fire which will make you go to the ends of the earth to call all men to come and see and taste how sweet divine life is in Christ Jesus—our life, our love, our all . . .

God bless you my very dear child in Christ. God grant you the grace to bring countless poor starving souls to the banquet of divine life in time and in eternity . . .

Blackrock College.
Good Friday 1936.

My dear Sister Margaret Mary,

Such a beautiful wish! \textit{Ut sis perenne mentibus Paschale Jesus gaudium.} It is so beautiful that I on my side can only repeat it as my wish for you as it was you who first penned it as a summary of your wishes for me, the wish of our holy Mother the Church for each one of us her children.

This Easter Sunday will have a joy all of its own for the whole Congregation because of the presence of Rev. Mother General with her Assistants in Rome. In them the whole Congregation is being received and blessed by Christ’s Vicar on earth: our most Holy Father.

My life here in my solitude that I now love has nothing of interest in it for anybody so I have little or nothing to write about. But that does not mean that I cease to take a most vital interest in this last bit of Nigeria that it has been my privilege—as an instrument in the hands of Our Lord and of His Blessed Mother—to build into Ireland. For me the Congregation of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary is that little bit of Nigeria which I hope, through God’s grace, will increase and spread far, far beyond the frontiers of Nigeria bringing with it and in it streams of divine life for poor Africa. I would like to see the Congregation set out on its life-giving activities—as God’s instrument of Life—in every village in all Africa! ! ! . . .

May God bless you and with you every member of your Congregation so near and so dear to God and His Blessed Mother.
LETTERS TO THE SISTERS AND OTHERS

With all affectionate good wishes—a very special blessing with the assurance of a continual remembrance in my prayers,
I am, my dear Sister Margaret Mary,
Very sincerely yours in Christ,

+J. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Rockwell College,
Cashel, Co. Tipperary.
13th August 1936.

Dear Mrs. Callanan,

I offer you all my sympathy in your great bereavement. I offer it also to your whole family at home and in Killeshandra and Nigeria.

Our Lord and our Blessed Mother will comfort you. Many are the fervent prayers that will go up to heaven beseeching our Merciful Saviour to grant eternal rest, light and peace to the soul of him who was such a good man of God, a good husband, a model father who won the love and esteem not alone of those who are so near and dear to him but also he won the love of God by his grand Catholic life—and it is that that consoles, for it means heaven and the vision of God as a reward. May Eternal Light shine on him and may he rest in God’s peace.

Tomorrow (Friday) I will offer the Holy Sacrifice for his eternal rest and I will ask Our Lord to console and comfort you and all in the family.

United with you in sorrow but also in faith, hope and love of Jesus our loving Lord and loving Parent.

I remain, dear Mrs. Callanan,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

*Copy of letter lent by Mrs. Callanan: Mother of Sister Mary Thomas and Sister Mary Raymond.*
My dear Sister M. Scholastica,

Only one line to express all the sympathy and sorrow I feel for you my very dear child in your sad bereavement—but also the consolation I feel with you—the unutterable consolation in knowing that he whom you loved and love now and shall love for all eternity left this world under circumstances that would indicate that he passed through the portals that lead from time into eternity only to meet our Blessed Mother herself with St. Joseph and his Blessed Guardian Angel to lead him up to the throne of Jesus Christ—to that Christ whom he ever loved and served faithfully.

His two sons, Priests of the Most High, were at the altar offering the holy Sacrifice for him—while his missionary daughter in Killeshandra was interceding for him. Then his whole family was there along with him—as in addition, some fifty priests and two bishops with the church full of sympathising worshippers! . . . How consoling to see all this—this love of our Holy Mother the Church for one of her children on his way to heaven—and that child was your father.

So while I sympathise with you and all, I rejoice with you and all because he whom you love is either in heaven or at least very near its gates. So with you and all I will continue to pray for the eternal rest of a good father, a faithful servant of God, a good Catholic man beloved by all who knew him.

I was speaking to your good dear mother for a few minutes only—her poor soul passing from joy to sorrow and from sorrow to joy seeing how God loved him whom she had known and loved for so many years.

Pardon this hastily written note—I said Mass for the eternal rest of your father, yesterday. I will see you in Killeshandra on Thursday.

God bless and comfort you my very dear child in Christ,

Your ever affectionate Father in Xsto.,

My dear Mother M. Bernard,

I wish you with all your novices and postulants a very happy, holy Christmas followed by a holy, happy New Year.

As usual I am offering a special Mass for the Congregation and all its works on Christmas Day.

Soon I hope to have the great pleasure of paying a short visit to Killeshandra when I hope to see you and all and meet you happy and well as usual.

I was not too well—feeling as all old men feel towards the end of the long journey—but am now better.

God bless you in a very special manner because of the great responsibility that is yours. God bless each and all of the novice sisters and postulants. I ask you to kindly remember me in your good prayers.

I am, my dear Mother Bernard,

Yours very sincerely in Xsto.,

+Jos. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

c/o Mrs. Dawson.
Maynooth, Co. Kildare,
13th Jan. 1937.

My dear Mother M. Gerard,

I am back here in Maynooth for a few days ever so much better after my stay in Killeshandra. But I was so sorry to find you and poor Mother M. Bernard in such poor health. I will continue to pray for you that God may strengthen you to bear patiently the great cross which continued illness is for all sufferers but more especially for those who are in a position of responsibility.

As against this gloomy aspect there was great promise of a healthy future to be seen in those incipient circles of cheerfulness that will soon have taken the place of those too sharp and penetrating angles of gloom for which some person’s features were never fashioned to feature!!

You will be pleased to know that my nervous system has become
so steady that I could sit beside the bedside of the sick without expressing my inner feelings by even the slightest movement of hand or foot! And all because of those ten glorious days in Killeshandra . . .

You know how I wish you to be strong and happy in heart and soul even though your poor body may not be well for some time yet.

I bless you and will continue to pray for you that God’s holy will may be always and perfectly fulfilled in you.

I am, my dear Mother M. Gerard,

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Clareville, Blackrock College.
19th Jan. 1937.

To: The Missionary Sisters,
    Our Lady of the Holy Rosary.

My very dear Sisters,

I have but a few minutes to talk to you—on paper—about the one event which just now keeps our hearts and minds fixed on one soul in particular, a soul that has entered the portals of eternity placed forever beyond the limits of time and of our little world here on earth.

Yesterday evening I called over to Dun Laoghaire to see poor Mother Xavier and our own Sisters. Poor Mother Xavier setting aside that wonderful power of endurance which enables her to stand up and overcome adversity in all its forms gave way to that something else in her which is woman’s weakness and her greatness: her tender love, her motherly love. For such was the love Mother Xavier had for Mother Aquinas, and has still for each one of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. So it was a little family gathering in which was fully realized the beautiful reality contained in the inspired words of Holy Scripture *Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum*—in joy as in sorrow.

I met Sister Scholastica and Sister Conleth. They had just come over. I was with them on their way back to their Convent Hostel. They took charge of me when I suggested taking charge of them!!
We were on the same tram over to the College—my first ride in a tram car with Holy Rosary Sisters!...

A call to Sion Hill Convent to spend a few moments alongside the Remains of poor Mother Aquinas in presence of the Blessed Sacrament. There stood the white-draped coffin all alone opposite the Tabernacle. Two Sisters were reciting the Penitential Psalms—while the little red light shed its flickering rays on this scene so pregnant with thoughts of God’s Reality and of the vanity of all else.

This morning Dr. Leen and myself offered the Holy Sacrifice for the repose of her soul. It was the last time on earth that we were to offer the Holy Sacrifice for her in presence of her own Remains, the now empty tabernacle of her own soul. Our own Sisters were, of course, present.

Later on the Remains were removed from Sion Hill to Cabra. Our Sisters were present and rode in one of the funeral carriages. In another was Dr. Leen and myself with a Dominican Father. In another came the family of poor Mother Aquinas—her brother and nieces and nephews.

Another last journey through the city of Dublin. Every person met by the cortege respectfully removed their hats, or crossed themselves while they looked with reverence at the white draped coffin in the hearse. They recognised this to be the coffin of a person consecrated to God, of a Nun.

At Cabra gates the whole community, with all the pupils and students in school and college were lined up. The Sisters held lighted candles. In dead silence during which every heart was moved with love and sorrow, while tears told the place Mother Aquinas held in the hearts of all there in Cabra, as in the hearts of all those that ever knew her.

Once again her body was placed in presence of the Blessed Sacrament in that little beautiful Chapel where most of her life on earth had been spent either as boarder, or as Postulant, Novice and Professed Sister. A Sister now over fifty years in Religion told me what Mother Aquinas looked like when as a small girl she entered the Boarding School some thirty-five years ago!...

Later I met Rev. Mother Prioress General, then Rev. Mother Prioress and the many, many friends of Killeshandra, i.e. all the Sisters in Cabra. We recalled the first departure from Cabra—in
Winter on a cold snowy morning when Mothers Xavier and Aquinas left Cabra for Killeshandra thirteen years ago—Dr. Leen and I were with them—and today in cold and snow we accompanied her back, to her final resting place—in peace everlasting—in Cabra! ... Mother General with Mothers Brigid and Thérèse were with the group. Tomorrow the Requiem Mass and the Burial. Just as I was coming away Mother General told me a group of Sisters would come down from Killeshandra for the Requiem Mass and Funeral tomorrow. This gesture of loving gratitude towards your first Mistress of Novices has filled the hearts of all those that love you and her, with added love for you and for her. You are worthy daughters of your Mother in Christ.

God bless you one and all, my very very dear children and Sisters in Christ. I bless you and pray for you unceasingly that each one of you may live a life that will prepare you for a beautiful happy death and a beautiful home above in Heaven where one day, please God, we will all meet, never again to be separated by death or changing times and circumstances of time.

Your ever affectionate Father in Christ Jesus,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

P.S.—Dr. Heerey sent a beautiful cablegram expressing his condolence and the condolence of Nigeria to the Rev. Mother General of the Dominican Sisters. This cable was shown to all of us.

The right and the grand thing to do.

We will all be more united than ever because of the holy death of Killeshandra’s first Mistress of Novices. She still continues her good work and will continue it for all time for the spiritual and temporal welfare of Killeshandra she loved so dearly.

J. S.

Blackrock College.
9th February 1937.

My dear Sister M. Scholastica,

To wish you a very happy feast with many heavenly favours obtained for you through the intercession of your great patron, St. Scholastica.
I will offer the holy Sacrifice of the Mass for your intentions and for the intentions of all those that are dear to you both here and in eternity.

I am afraid I will not be able to call to see you tomorrow. I have had a touch of the "flu" and have had to remain within doors for some days. I will be alright soon.

You have heard of the great news in Killeshandra? Sisters are sailing for Nigeria in April! How happy they are. I hope Sister M. Conleth is well . . . and I was so forgetful as not to ask how you are after that bad dose of "flu" fever you had.

I bless you both with a special blessing for your own good dear self for your feast tomorrow.

I am, my dear Sister M. Scholastica,
Your affectionate Father in Xсто.,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
22nd March 1937.

My dear Mother Gerard,

A line in a hurry to tell you that I have arranged with Fr. Macken of Nigeria, to come along with me on Saturday next (Holy Saturday) to Killeshandra. You have already two priests, with Father Macken there will be three. One of them can take on the Master of Ceremonies' function.

Please God the weather will be alright.

I’m sorry Father Danagher is leaving. You could not have a better priest in Killeshandra. But then Father Farrell is well known to you and all the “ancients” in Killeshandra. He is an expert in all that concerns retreats, lectures, mystical theology, ascetical theology, etc. etc.—and now an experienced missionary. No one could be more highly recommended by your spiritual director. This being so while Father Danagher will be missed yet he will be replaced by an exceptionally good experienced priest with all those qualities that go to make him an excellent chaplain.

I will be very glad to see you and Killeshandra again and especially on Easter Sunday. We will travel by bus—the 1.30 p.m. This will get us into Cavan about 4.30 and into Killeshandra by 5.30.
All kindest and best wishes to you and all—with graces in abundance during this holy week.

The retreat in Kiltegan went off alright. Many, many thanks for all the prayers offered up for the young priests and for me during that great week of preparation for ordination.

God bless you, my dear Mother Gerard,
Ever your affectionate Father in Xstol,
+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Blackrock College.
20th May 1937.

My dearest Sister M. Carmel,

On this the second last day of the octave of the great festival of Pentecost, I wish to thank you for so kindly remembering me. Missionaries one and all have a special claim to this day of days, as their own special feastday. It is the great day of heavenly joy. In every letter that came to me it was extraordinary how the dominant note was exuberant joy. The Holy Ghost does indeed fill to overflowing the hearts of His children with heavenly happiness.

In spirit I am often with you in these great festivals. I had letters from the travellers to Nigeria, and they too were all expectancy and delight. They were then at Lagos. Now, of course, they are at home in some one of the convents in the Nigeria of their dreams.

I was sorry to have missed the recently returned Nigerians. Later on I hope to meet them and repeat all the questions you have already put to them. I am so glad to hear that all are so well and that they too have left their hearts in Nigeria.

I am well and happy at the thought of knowing you are all so happy and that you one and all love Africa. It is God has given you this untold treasure of love. You are loving with His love, living in your hearts. May that love ever become more and more intense at the prayer of Our Blessed Mother and through her special protection.

I bless you my very dear child and will continue to remember you in all my prayers. Won’t you too pray for me likewise.

I am,

Your own affectionate Father in Christ,
+JOSEPH SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.
My dear Sister M. Gabriel,

A few lines to tell you how glad I was to have a letter from you at Pentecost. The happiness that fills your soul breathes in its every line, in spite of the “Periculum examinis” on the horizon before you! You know how I will pray for you until the good news is announced by your own dear good self . . .

I am here as usual in my little hermitage in Clareville, working away, reading books I love, preparing for retreats . . . that I don’t love . . . naturally speaking, but that I do love as a missionary and priest, for they keep me in contact with all that’s most beautiful, most consoling—in touch with Him who is Eternal Life, Eternal Beauty, Eternal Love . . . Are not Dr. Leen’s books beautiful? . . .

Retain and thank God for the spirit of joyousness that permeates your life: God’s greatest gift! And won’t you remember me, as indeed I know you do, in your audiences with Our Lord and Our Blessed Mother, with the Blessed Trinity . . .?

God bless you, and all those you think of and love . . .

Your affectionate Father in Christ,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
12th August 1937.

My dear Mother Gerard,

Many thanks for that letter you sent to me. God has been very good to you in enabling you to bear your infirmities with such grand fortitude. I know what it means in all its phases including the sense of utter weariness but calm joy of having at least done one’s duty as best one could—leaving all in God’s holy Hands. And now you are free—God has arranged that too. Thank Him for everything including the hard days and the hard knocks, all of which enter of necessity into the life of a missionary “Soldier of Christ”.

As for my friendship and affection, you have everything this old heart of mine can contain—everybody in Killeshandra shall ever be dear to me as my own life. God has left me my heart to love with.
He has never asked me to renounce that—how good He is! You won’t expect me in Killeshandra for sometime—until such time as God may tell me to go there—that too is all in the best interests of Killeshandra.

I have just seen in the papers that Kilmore has a new Bishop, Most Rev. Dr. Lyons. He is a great friend of missionaries. God has sent him to Kilmore.

As for myself I’m getting along very happy and very well. I begin to find the giving of retreats to priests the most useful of spiritual works for my own soul—God has arranged this too; once again how good He is!

I have not forgotten—you—Onitsha—Cork—Killarney—on the way back to Dublin in the old “Isis” and then to Killeshandra; nor have I forgotten Killeshandra. Those are one and all the most hallowed and happiest of loving memories—God has given and left them to us—we will carry them away with us to heaven—oh, heaven—what it means for an old man to look up to it—aye even long for the day when God sends the message “Come along now for the final examination”.

God bless you my very dear Mother Gerard—may His holy Peace fill your heart and soul with heavenly happiness and joy.

Your ever affectionate Father in Xsto.,


P.S.—I may write again—say in a year’s time—but you might write a little sooner to remind me of this promise ! ! . . . Don’t forget that angles are bad, and curves good!

Affect. in Xsto.—J. S.

Rockwell College, Cashel, Co. Tipperary.
20th August 1937.

My very dear Rev. Mother and dear Daughter in Christ,

Heartiest congratulations on your appointment to the highly responsible position you now occupy in the Community.

All the members of the Community—in fact all the Sisters in Killeshandra just love you and so do all of us. That will make the carrying out of your onerous duties ever so much easier. But above
and beyond all that is the fact that your appointment comes from God and has been approved by Him through the canonical authority in the Church.

And, to wind up, I would add that you are perfectly equipped for your present apostolate as Rev. Mother Superior. God bless you then. He is with you. Fear nothing—all will be well.

Tomorrow (Saturday) I am offering up the holy Sacrifice for your special intentions. Whatever value my life's activities may have in the eyes of God is offered to Him for Killeshandra, with all the love of my heart. But I will have a special intention all for your own dear good self. I remember you so well. And you are ever the same as when I first met you only nearer and dearer to and more like Him you love, and as seen in His own Mother—Our Blessed Mother.

Your letter gave me great pleasure—it was so like yourself—if ever you come to Dublin won't you let me know; I would so like to see you, just for a few minutes even.

May I ask you to remember me to all in Killeshandra. They know how near they ever are to me—the thought of you all keeps me so near Our Blessed Mother—and when one is near her one is sure to be near Jesus.

Three weeks of our month's retreat ended just now. The retreatants are now going to Blackrock to complete the fourth week. They were just like novices once again during these very happy weeks together.

I will do my own retreat in Dublin with the Fathers.

I am very well though just a little tired, but happier than I could tell you in words. God is so good! I feel—in fact am convinced—that all this comes to me because of Killeshandra.

With all the affection of my heart in union with the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, I bless you and bless Killeshandra.

I am, my dear Rev. Mother,

Your affectionate Father in Xsto.,


Blackrock College, Dublin.

19th October 1937.

My dear Sister M. Finbar,

A line to send you with my most affectionate good wishes a
oldest type of missionaries that the men of today and the Sisters of
today—are “almost” (it would be too much to expect old
missionaries to admit more than that!) as good as the missionaries
of say twenty or thirty years ago!

I’ve got to stop—for today—just for today—for the airmail that’s
taking this letter is about taking off . . . If only I could accompany
the letters . . .

God bless you my very dear Rev. Mother and very dear Sisters.

Ever your very affectionate Father in Xsto.,


P.S. (1)—I thank very sincerely the Sisters who have written to
me during the last twelve months—and during the last five years.
May I beg of you to continue this form of your God-given apostolate.
Your letters coming from the front where all is alive—instinct with
Divine life and energy and joyousness bring something of your
Nigerian atmosphere into my Clareville hermitage. You keep me in
contact with the apostolate—with Nigeria—with God and with His
Blessed Mother Mary—your Mother and mine. J. S.

P.S. (2)—The accounts of your work among the patients in the
hospital are heart and soul movers. A special blessing to the whole
hospital world: doctors, Sister nurses, native nurses, patients, cooks,
boys, etc. etc.

God bless you one and all and make you perfect in your love of
Him as you are being made perfect by Him in your love of your
poor African brothers and sisters, especially the poor mothers and
babies.

J. S.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
22nd December 1937.

My dear Mother M. Bernard,

I wish you personally, and with you, all your dear novices a very
happy Christmas followed by a very holy and happy New Year.
When I had the pleasure of meeting you and Sister M. Gabriel in
Dublin there was mention made of the possibility of my being with
you for Christmas in Killeshandra. And I too had a great desire to
be with you. Soon after your departure a very pressing invitation was sent to me by dear Rev. Mother General. Unfortunately for reasons of health I am unable to travel; but this is rather a matter of doctor’s orders and precaution than anything else. You see I am not growing younger nor stronger as Christmas follows Christmas. I will try to make up for this unwilling failure of mine by praying for you and your novices more earnestly than ever if indeed that were possible. I will offer up the holy Sacrifice for your intentions and the intentions of the whole Congregation in Europe and Africa at the offering of the Midnight Mass.

You may have learned that my former Vicar General in Nigeria Right Rev. Monsignor Grandin who had been appointed in 1927 Prefect Apostolic of Oubangui, South of Lake Chad, has just been appointed its first Vicar Apostolic as well as its first Bishop. He is now in France. He has written to me and to two other old Nigerian fellow missionaries here in Ireland—Rev. Father Vincent Davey P.P. of Antrim and Father Thaddeus O’Connor of Rockwell College, to go over to Alencon, Orne Normandy (near Lisieux) for his consecration, so that Nigeria will be well represented by her former Fathers-in-Christ. Right Rev. Mgr. Grandin carries in his heart such a profound love for Nigeria that do as he may, he has to fuse it into the new love he has for his new mission of Oubangui. Thank God this can be done, for there is but one Divine Living Love in which we all participate, along with all those we love—One Lord, One God, One Faith, One Love—One Africa!

May our Blessed and Divine Infant Jesus, our own missionary from heaven, ever inflame your hearts and souls and whole being with an ever greater heavenly fire of love for all that is God—for all that is in the interest of God.

To you my dear Mother Bernard and to each and all your novices, my heartiest Christmas greetings with my blessing.

Your affectionate Father in Christ Jesus,

My dear Sister M. Gabriel,
I wish you a very happy Christmas. The wish contains all that a Catholic heart can wish for those it loves in matters pertaining to time and eternity . . .

In passing, may I express the hope that you passed that exam in London. It was a pleasure to see you so full of enthusiasm for this particular work assigned to you by holy obedience, all for the furtherance of the great cause of Christ in the formation of the daughters of Mary in Nigeria, to the image and likeness of Christ so beautifully exemplified in His own Blessed Mother, Mary, our Mother too.

May your Christmas be a day of perfect happiness . . .

+JOS. SHANAHAN.

Blackrock College, Dublin.
23rd December 1937.

My dear Sister M. Gerard,
I wish you a very happy Christmas and a holy New Year. The old, old wish, but it implies almost—if not absolutely—everything that a Christian but above all a religious missionary can wish for a fellow-Christian and a fellow-missionary.

Thoughts and images of Onitsha on the Niger keep coming to the forefront of my mind as I, an old Nigerian, write to you another Nigerian.

May God bless you and fill your heart with every token of His profound love for you especially during this holy season of Christmas.

Ever remembering you in my prayers and wishing to be remembered by you in your prayers,

Your affectionate Father in Xsto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.
My dear Sister M. Laboure,

I write to send you a blessing with all my best wishes on the occasion of your departure from Scotland for the Old Land.

I shall ever remember those happy days God gave us to spend together. Nor shall I forget the grand letters you wrote to me.

It is true we shall seldom meet again but we know that that is not necessary for those whose life—whose real life is hidden with Christ in God. In His Sacred Heart—in His Living Loving Heart we can always meet. When you speak to God in your own heart, won’t you sometimes remember me for it is the one self-same God who is in my heart and in all our hearts—and when I speak to Him I too shall remember you. Thus shall our meeting with God ever enable us to meet each other in God.

God bless you my very dear daughter in Christ,

Ever your affectionate Father in Christ,


Blackrock College, Dublin.
5th July 1938.
Your brother is to write also and ask to be accepted.
The military discharge can be obtained easily—and when obtained
he will go straight on from Baldonnel to his new religious army
corps base at Kilshane.

This is all for today: I know it will give you pleasure to know
that a move has been made.

Please God you will have the happiness of seeing your second
brother join Brother Xavier, whose profession is to take place on
the 16th or 17th of this month.

I was in Rockwell for a great rally of the C.S.Sp. Southern
Promoters. There were over 300 present—Waterford has a most
flourishing branch; they have asked me to go down some day to
see them before I sail for my new African home in the Vicariate
Apostolic of Zanzibar—East Africa. With this new grace given to
me by a loving tender Father—God’s own divine Self—I experience
once again all the joys of olden times when age did not matter;
when God and Africa and souls alone mattered and life in the
missionfield was heaven on earth; to live all this once again when
I had thought all was dead and gone for ever is heavenly.

My writing is awful—although my heart is full of gratitude with
renewed hope for I will see Africa again and live, and please God
die there in my beloved missionary home. It is a short way from
Africa to heaven—God will see to that for His missionary priests,
Sisters and Brothers.

God bless you my very dear Sister,
Your ever affectionate Father in Xsto.,


Blackrock College.
31st August 1938.

My dear Mrs. Ryan,

I am late—as usual, in answering your very kind letter and
acknowledging your generous offering for a Mass. The Mass was
offered on receipt of your letter.

Yes I am to be once again among my own people in my own
adopted home: Africa. God is indeed very good to me in sending
me back to Africa, even though it is not to Nigeria . . .
LETTERS TO THE SISTERS AND OTHERS

Tomorrow I’m crossing over to England for my last Retreat. When I return I will let you know what day I’d be able to get down to Abbeyleix to spend a day or so with you for the sake of old times. Needless to say I will be honoured if Joe is good enough to come up to Dublin and motor me down to Leix.

Kindly remember me to Joe and to Pat and May. I hope you and all are very well.

God bless you and them and all those you love.
I am, my dear Mrs. Ryan,

Very sincerely yours,

+Jos. Shanahan.

Blackrock College.
4th October 1938.

My dear Rev. Mother Cecilia,

I enclose a small cheque which I would ask you to be good enough to accept with a view to providing some few “extras” for the community on the occasion of the patronal feast of the Congregation on the 7th.

Beforehand I wish you and all a very holy, happy feast.

I had hoped I could be with you tomorrow—but I can’t manage to do so.

I will be with you on the 6th for the 7th. I hope to have got fairly free from this cold which keeps me just now confined to my room.

God bless you, in His name I bless you,

Ever your affectionate Father in Xsto.,


(Please, no answer to this.)

(Postcard) Marseilles.
1st December 1938.

To Sister Scholastica (Holy Rosary Sisters), Dominican Convent, Muckross, Dublin, Ireland.

Leaving Europe just now—sailing in a few minutes. My last
thoughts with you and all in K., Nigeria and Ireland. God bless you all. Am happy and well. Dr. L. here—well likewise.

So once again I’m off to Africa! One of the happiest days in my life . . . leaving All—and its sorrow makes me still happier. It is for the greatest and grandest of all causes: the cause of Christ and the salvation of souls, and for eternity. This too is your vocation, the joys and sorrows that are now mine shall be yours one day—please God. How good God is always—everywhere—and for all.

My blessing to you and Sister C.

J. S.
While the Light Fails

(1940-1943)

For a whole year after he left Ireland in December 1938 for Kenya “to the home God has given me in Nairobi”, Bishop Shanahan was seriously ill and did not write.

For a long time I could not write. It was a physical impossibility. My brain would not function. If I did write I would have written of sadness—of self—of—God knows what—and that was a source of intense suffering because you and the Sisters continued to write . . .

In June 1940 he flew down to the Transvaal to spend six months with the Holy Rosary Sisters in their new foundations at Edenvale and Vereeniging. He would have liked to remain and serve with the C.S.Sp. Fathers in their mission in the Orange Free State but wartime emergencies caused him to be recalled to Kenya.

But Heaven on earth must be experienced only at rare intervals to encourage us to keep on, sacrificing all in order to obtain Heaven in Heaven with our heavenly Father, where there shall be no more partings.

So! Off I go . . .

Eternity with God in heaven—that is our goal.

The letters of Bishop Shanahan reveal a depth of suffering, both physical and mental that at times seems to have crushed him beneath its weight. Only the prayers and affection of his fellow-missionaries,
only his unshakable confidence in God sustained him in these months and years of darkness.

I had been very ill: and of necessity I had to remain silent. The whole world—my whole little world—got narrowed down to the room I am living in here on the fringe of the Great Desert. It was not worth while thinking of anything or anybody now, except in connection with the very near future and that was and is, Eternity! Had the “human contact” I mention not been kept up by the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, I believe the thread that still kept me connected with this world would have snapped . . .

It was God’s way of purifying my soul.

But you kept on writing . . .

* For everything I give thanks to God.
Everything that has happened to me, my faults, my failings, shortcomings, trials, disappointments, hard sayings—and we all meet with such—God has used for the sanctification of my soul.
I can only offer to God myself with my old suffering body, just as I stand or sit silently in His presence. I can’t even kneel. I have not even the power to pray in the usual way—illness has reduced me to such a state of helplessness.

It was for us Holy Rosary Sisters, for Nigeria—for Africa, and for the Church that Bishop Shanahan suffered—suffered exile of heart, exile of body until his death in exile on that morning of Christmas Day 1943—in Kenya.

St. Austin’s Catholic Mission, Nairobi,
P.O. Box 423, Kenya, B.E.A.
[Undated—possibly May 1940.]

Rev. and dear Mother M. Brigid,
I would have written you long ago but I could not get hold of
your address in Edenvale. I sent on a wire on spec. hoping it might find you, but the Post Office informed me that you were unknown—to them. That will explain, in part, my silence, for I should have thought of writing to His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. O’Leary. Only yesterday the Loreto Sisters here gave me his address. So I wired to him and have written today asking him to forward you these lines, enough to start with until I can write to you directly in your new convent home.

Rev. Mother General wrote to me but she forgot to give me your address—Edenvale—was all she mentioned.

Will you let me know immediately—if you please—when you intend to sail for Ireland. It might be possible for me to get down to see you before you sail provided that it is not too early a date.

Mother Philomena and Mother Emmanuel with Sister M. Madeleine Sophie wrote expressing the hope that I would call—if possible. I cabled immediately to our Superior General for his sanction—He cabled back: “Go South”.

Meanwhile the time is passing and no news from you. I do not and cannot blame anybody but myself, for I have not once answered your many letters to me since I left Ireland for Africa.

Should it be possible for me to get down to Edenvale all will soon be explained in a few minutes.

For the present I will content myself with wishing you céad mile fáilte to Africa. How unexpected this new missionary foundation is to me, you may easily guess, but how I welcome and bless it and bless you and bless all who are to work in this new portion of the Vineyard appointed to you by Our Lord’s official representative, His Excellency, Most Rev. Dr. O’Leary. I know you will do the same great work for God and poor Africa that you have been so successfully doing in S. Nigeria.

You know how much I wish to see you, should it please holy Providence to arrange matters so that this may be possible.

You and all the Missionary Sisters are ever in my thoughts and prayers. I bless you and all in Edenvale Convent,

Yours very sincerely in Christ,

My dear Mother Brigid,

I won’t try to tell you the joy that was mine when your airmail letter arrived late yesterday evening, the 3rd inst. I was waiting for it to make final arrangements as to the best way to get down to Edenvale. I had almost definitely arranged to sail from Mombasa on Monday next the 10th. Now having read your letters—all three—telling me to come the quickest way possible I went down to book and made arrangements to go by plane. I cannot mention the day or the place of embarkation but I hope to be in Durban by the 13th inst. When I get there I’ll wire to let you know the train I’ll travel by and the time I expect to reach Germiston . . . I feel happier than at any time in my life at the thought of meeting you and Mother Philomena and Mother Emmanuel, all of dear old S. Nigeria—our Sisters M. M. Sophie and M. Patrick also of Nigeria—but in spirit only—whereas we had the privilege of being there in body and soul—so here is three cheers for Nigeria—and Killeshandra, and Edenvale! Won’t I have whole regiments of questions ready to attack you—but peacefully! I’ll write no more just now; better wait until we meet once again in Africa. God is good and I’m sure our Beloved Mother has had a motherly hand in this most extraordinary meeting of old Nigerians in Edenvale! How good our Blessed Mother Mary always is . . .

I’m just sending a few lines by airmail to Killeshandra—and Bridgwater—and Edinburgh—and Dublin—and, Nigeria! ! ! . . . for the first time since ’38! I would like that we would all share in each others’ happiness—for is not the joy of one the joy of all—as the sorrow of one of us is the sorrow of all!

You will have to say a special prayer to Our Lady, through St. Therese that I may reach Edenvale safely—this is to be my first experience of “riding” in a plane.

I am sending just a line to Rev. Father Standing and to His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. O’Leary to tell them that I am to be with you next week.

I am so grateful to Father Standing for his kindness in arranging to put me up in his place. It was also very good of the Bishop to
take my letters out to you, all the way to Edenvale. There's a feeling of great kindness in all this—God is good in sending you to Edenvale. Now—the air! . . .

God bless you, my dear Mother,
Ever your affectionate Father in Xto.,

+JOS. SHANAHAN, C.S.Sp.

Sister M. Philomena writes: A copy of Dr. Shanahan's last letter to me written in pencil by his own hand, after his bad attack in October 1942. I give it all as he wrote it. You will see that it contains a message for every sister in the Congregation. He could never stop at one! It is a reply to my cable telling him we would go to Nairobi if possible. It is apparent that the writing of this letter cost him much physical effort.

Catholic Mission, Kalimoni, P.O. Thika, Kenya.
27th October 1942.

To dear Mother Philomena,
Per kind care of Rev. Father Giltenan.

My dear Mother Philomena,
Oh, how glad I am to be just able to write even a scrawled page! Telegraphic fashion I write.
1) Your cable filled my heart with hope and joy and courage. So you would come all the way from S. Africa to Nairobi to see me! before I passed away—and at any rate you would do everything possible to help me—and Mother Emmanuel to be with you. What a joy it would have been. I bless you both. And as for the great generous offer—for the new token of the depths of your friendship . . .
2) Now it is not necessary. I am on the mend—well on the way to recovery.
3) In any case I could not have allowed you to come. The situation in Nairobi makes it impossible—don't even think of it, for it
is impossible! And this, much as I would like to see you—but not in Nairobi!

4) Later on it might be barely possible for me to go and see you. Much as I would like to—you know that.

5) Father Giltenan has been my Nigerian Good Angel taking the place of you all. God bless him.

6) I received every care possible in hospital. And now in a little room here in Kalimoni nursed attentively by the Sisters . . .

7) I was very ill for about six weeks.

8) Today for the first time I went to Mass in thanksgiving and received Communion at hands of Father Giltenan. What a blessing. And gratitude.

9) Later I will write at length.

10) I am happy and God has granted me marvellous graces with the few pains—I feel heaven is now not far.

11) This is my first letter for . . . years. And it is to you and to Mother Emmanuel and to all the Sisters in Transvaal, Nigeria, Ireland.

12) How I bless you! You are ever in my mind, prayers and heart. You are one with my life.

   With affectionate greetings to you my dear Mother Philomena and to all the Sisters in S. A. and Ir . . .

   Ever your very fond Father in Christ,

      JOS. SHANAHAN.

(Note—I imagine the numeration was to help himself. You will notice that our Congregation filled his whole mind and heart. He must have been a great channel of grace for us—may God grant we recognise those graces in their abundance. The "situation in Nairobi" may have been military. Fr. G. refers to military difficulties but did not explain further. S. M. Ph.)
Letter dictated, and typed by one of the Mangu Fathers.

Dear Mother Mary Brigid,

I received all the letters and cables and I am sorry that I was unable to answer them sooner. During the early part of the year I was rather ill but thank God I am slowly improving. I left Kalimoni Mission last May as the place is unhealthy and there are so many mosquitoes there that they line up in order to get a bite.

I am now staying at the White Sisters’ Convent, Mangu. The climate here agrees with me and I am now beginning to feel much better. The chaplain Father Lammer, C.S.Sp. and myself share a house which is only a few yards away from the chapel. I am now able to say Mass every day and hope to be able to say my office before the end of the year.

Mangu Mission and College are only a few miles away and the Fathers stationed there pay me a visit every week. From time to time I spend a day at the mission and enjoy it very much. One of the Mangu Fathers is writing this letter for me but later on I hope to send you a few lines personally.

Thanks very much for all the prayers and for your kindly remembrance of me. I always give you and your Sisters a special memento in my daily Mass asking God to comfort and bless you all.

Your Sisters are doing great work in Bridgwater and in South Africa. May God reward their efforts. I am also writing to the Sisters in Bridgwater, S. Africa and Nigeria.

Wishing you and your Sisters every blessing,

I remain,

Yours most sincerely in Jesus Christ,

J. I. Shanahan.

Bishop Shanahan’s last letter to all the Sisters.
Dictated to one of the Holy Ghost Fathers at Mangu Mission, Kenya, and typed.
Holy Family Convent, Mangu.
P. O. Thika, Kenya Colony, B.E.A.
19th August 1943.

My dear Professed Sisters, Professed Novices, Novices and Postulants,

I thank you very much for all the nice letters you have sent me. I am deeply grateful for all the prayers you have said and are saying for me. You will be glad to hear that my health has improved and that I am now able to say Mass daily. Each day I pray for you all, asking God to bless and protect and make you efficient workers in His vineyard.

I am very happy here and the Sisters, who are French, are very kind to me. The Holy Ghost Fathers from the neighbouring missions call often to see me. One of the Mangu Fathers is writing this letter for me but, later on when I get stronger I hope to send a few lines personally.

Wishing you all every blessing,

I remain,

Sincerely yours in J. C.,

J. I. Shanahan.
Extract from Bishop Shanahan’s notebook:

Read this last little note of the last happy days of my novitiate during a short stay in Onitsha Town on 5th October 1903, six years after my novitiate:

Thanks be to you my God, for having preserved me up to this in your holy Apostolic Congregation.
Thanks for having been so good as to send me to Africa.
May your holy name be blessed and praised for all eternity.
May my heart never wander from you.
May I never neglect spending every atom of my energy, mental and physical in saving those souls you love so much—because so unhappy.

Ah! Deus meus et omnia, when the outline of the everlasting hills appears on the horizon of eternity, may it be my happy lot at last to see you and love you for all eternity.

Then at last I cannot sin and I cannot stray away from you.

Then at this seeing you “facies ad faciem” won’t I join with the angels’ choir singing with joyful heart:

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO. HOSANNA IN EXCELSIS. GLORIA PATRI ET FILIO ET SPIRITUI SANTO. SICUT ERAT IN PRINCIPIO ET NUNC ET SEMPER ET IN SAECULA SAECULORUM.
Amen.