

DECREE

IN THE DUBLIN OR ACHONRY CASE
CONCERNING THE BEATIFICATION AND
CANONIZATION

OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

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(From the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*.)

This noble cause shall rise like the morning dawn, an augury of that kingdom of justice and peace which, after its widespread overthrow in human society, cannot be duly restored except in Christ, by observing the law of Him who said to His disciples: "A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." (John xiii. 34, 35.) For, as St. Leo the Pope says: "We should not doubt that this saying applies not only to the disciples of Christ, but to all the faithful and to the universal Church, which as a whole heard those words of salvation in the persons of those who were present." (*Ninth Sermon on Lent*.)

She who is the subject of this Cause seems to have cherished and to have realised in some degree the restoration in Christ of the said kingdom when, illuminated by the teaching and aflame with the charity of the Gospel, she herself strove with wonderful success, and still strives through the Institute of the Sisters of Charity founded by her, to promote the good of religion and the welfare of her native land.

Mary, for so she was called, was born at Cork, a city of Ireland, on the 19th of January in the year 1787, the issue of a mixed marriage between David Aikenhead, a Scotsman by nationality and an Anglican by religion, and Mary of the family of Stackpole, who professed the Catholic faith. Soon after her birth she was confided to the charge of Mary Rorke, a pious nurse, by whose care she was cleansed in the sacred font, according to the Catholic rite, in a chapel close by. According to an agreement added to the marriage contract, her father had determined that his children should be instructed and educated in the Anglican religion, and all access to Catholic ceremonies was strictly forbidden them, but Mary, who lived with her nurse until the sixth year of her age, grew up imbued with the Catholic mysteries of Faith and rules of conduct. When she had to return to her father's home, her nurse accompanied her to continue this training, and in this self-imposed task had the help of two pious ladies living in the house, the little girl's grandmother and her aunt, Mrs. O'Gorman. Mary was in this way able to frequent the Bishop's Chapel, hear the word of God, and assist at the bloodless Sacrifice of the Mass, and other holy rites and prayers. The love and reverence she had for her father was so great that the child was very much afraid of professing the Catholic Faith openly, for he would not allow his daughter to do anything contrary to the heresy to which he was firmly attached. The little girl had in consequence to go through a bitter struggle in her soul, but helped by God, by the story told her in the Gospel of the different fate that befel the rich glutton and the poor Lazarus, by the books she received from her aunt and read with avidity, by the teachers and priests who instructed her in the true religion, and finally by the rites and ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at which she used to assist, Mary succeeded in overcoming all obstacles. Deeply moved in her soul by all these considerations, she abjured the errors of her father, and made up her mind deliberately to follow with constancy, even unto death, the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Faith and religion, of which it is written "Where Peter is, there is the Church"; and on the 6th day of June of the year 1802 she made her solemn profession of it in the presence of reputable and trustworthy witnesses. On the 29th day of June of the same year she made her First Holy Com-

munion, and on the 2nd day of July was confirmed with sacred chrism by the Most Rev. Francis Moylan, Bishop of Cork. In the previous year David, at the approach of death, was, by the help of divine grace, moved to pity at the sight of the mother beseeching God with exemplary piety and bewailing distressfully the prospect of being separated for ever, on account of diversity of religion, from the husband she loved: he ordered them to send for a Catholic priest to give him suitable instruction in the true Faith and law of Christ, made his formal abjuration of heresy, and so, strengthened by the holy sacraments, died peacefully in the obedience of the Apostolic See, in the bosom of Mother Church, and in the embrace of the Lord. Mary now distinguished herself by her devotedness, piety, diligence, attention to her younger brothers and sisters, assiduous prayer and meditation, daily recitation of the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and frequent reception of Holy Communion. But it was in relieving the poor that her charity was especially noticeable: for taking two pious ladies as companions—Miss Cecilia Lynch and, later, the rich and influential Mrs. O'Brien—she spent the four years, from the year 1808 to the year 1812, in visiting along with them houses and hospitals for the sick, and homes for girls and orphans, in Dublin and in Cork, bringing them food, clothes, medicines, and other supplies and comforts for the health of body and soul. Her directors during this time were the Most Rev. Francis Moylan, Bishop of Cork, and the Most Rev. Florence MacCarthy, his Coadjutor, and the Most Rev. Daniel Murray, afterwards Archbishop of Dublin, and they were also her chosen advisers and guides in preparing the way of the Lord with a view to her embracing religious life and perfection. In the year 1810 the Servant of God assisted at the religious profession of Miss Cecilia Lynch in the chapel of the Poor Clare nuns. When the above-mentioned Most Rev. Daniel Murray announced his intention of establishing in Dublin a house for Sisters of Charity, an idea which commended itself also to the Rev. Patrick Everard, President of the College in the town of Maynooth, and afterwards Archbishop of Cashel, Mary fell in completely with their plans, and taking with her her companion, Alicia Walsh, set out for York to get trained in religious life in the house of the Congregation of the English Virgins that flourished there. For three years they practised, under the direction of the Mistress of Novices and the Superioress, the rules of the religious community, with praiseworthy diligence and fervor. Meanwhile the Servant of God, having prayed earnestly to Heaven for help, undertook the charge of founding the new Congregation and strove to provide it with suitable rules. She examined the rules of several approved Institutes, and rejected them as unsuited to the end she proposed, but at last, in the year 1821, she found what she had long sought, in those rules which, after three years' work, R. P. Robert St. Leger, of the Society of Jesus, adapted from the Constitutions of the same Society. The Servant of God recognised in these rules the ideal she had long before conceived in her mind, and, as such, recommended them earnestly to the observance of her Sisters and daughters. When this was done, Mary Aikenhead and her companion, Alicia Walsh, made the three religious vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience on the first day of September of the year 1815, at first for a year only, and then, in the following year, on the 9th day of December, they made them for ever, in the presence of the Most Rev. Daniel Murray, who had obtained a rescript to this effect from the Holy See, and at the same time the new-born Congregation received the name of "The Irish Sisters of Charity." The first house of the same Congregation, together with a home for girls exposed to danger, was, by the advice of the Most Rev. Daniel Murray, established in North William Street, Dublin, with the Servant of God as Superioress. From that time on, as means for the support of the Sisters and the poor increased, several houses, hospitals, and homes were committed to the care of the Sisters in the cities and towns of the Island of Ireland and the neighboring Island of England. In these homes sick people and orphans, boys and girls, experienced the wonderful helpfulness and charity of the Sisters, who followed the lead of their Superioress,

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