

3. The Redemptorists

St Mary's Church and monastery belongs to a community of Redemptorist priests and Brothers. The name 'Redemptorists' is taken from their official Latin title, *Congregatio Sanctissimi Redemptoris*, the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. It is abbreviated to C.Ss.R, which the members normally use after their names. Later in this chapter, we shall consider some of the individuals who shaped that story, but let us begin with a brief look at the history of the Redemptorists.

Who are the Redemptorists?

The Redemptorists are a Congregation of priests and Brothers who live in community, bound by the traditional three vows of religion (poverty, chastity and obedience) and an additional vow of perseverance, that commits them to the Congregation until death. They were founded on 9 November 1732 in a small town called Scala, high above the beautiful coast of Amalfi, by a young priest from Naples called Alphonsus Maria de Liguori (1696–1787). Born into the minor nobility of the Kingdom of Naples, Alphonsus had begun a precocious but highly successful early career at the bar. A disastrous law case, involving some sharp practice on the part of his opponents, brought him to reconsider his future in the courts. To the horror of his ambitious father, he applied to become a priest in the diocese of Naples. Ordained at the age of thirty and contrary to the hopes of his family that he would cultivate an ecclesiastical career that would lead to a mitre, Alphonsus devoted

himself instead to ministry among the poorest – the workers of the city and its suburbs, the shepherds and goatherds in the mountains to the south.

There was no shortage of priests in eighteenth-century Naples. Quite the contrary, there were too many priests with little to do by way of pastoral work. The situation was different in the hinterland. Shocked by the spiritual ignorance and pastoral neglect he found in the mountain villages, Alphonsus resolved, with a small group of like-minded companions, to minister for them and other “most abandoned souls”. The beginnings of the Congregation were enthusiastic, but within a few months, all but one of his first companions had abandoned him. The one remaining was a layman called Vito Curzio, the first lay Brother of the Congregation. Painfully, Alphonsus and Vito picked up the threads of what had begun with such enthusiasm.



St Clement Hofbauer “second founder” of the Redemptorists

Alphonsus’s way of reaching people with the good news of the Gospel was through a method known as the “parish mission”. This was an intensive course of instruction on the basic teachings of the Church with a call to radical conversion and recommitment, along with the celebration of the sacraments. Emerging in seventeenth-century France under the influence of Church reformers like Vincent de Paul, parish missions were instruments of mass evangelisation. The parish mission arrived in Italy not long after this, and among its principal proponents, were the Jesuits of the Kingdom of Naples. The members of Alphonsus’s community combined periods of intense itinerant preaching from parish to parish, when the weather and the agricultural calendar made it feasible, with time devoted to prayer and study in the solitude of the community house.

For more than fifty years until his death, Alphonsus struggled for the survival of his Congregation with a government that respected religion, but did not want any more religious Orders, much less Orders that looked beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Naples to the authority of Rome. By a tragic turn of events, Alphonsus, now an infirm old man, deaf and almost blind, ended up formally excluded by the pope from the Congregation he had founded. It looked like the end of a dream, except for a curious development. Two young Bohemian pilgrims to Rome, Clement Hofbauer and Thadeus Hübl, found themselves one morning hearing Mass in the small church of a religious congregation of which they had never heard. Within a short time, they had applied to join it, were received, professed, ordained and sent back home with the mission to found a house of the Congregation somewhere within the boundaries of the Austrian Empire.

By 1787, Clement had established a vibrant community in Warsaw. Twenty years later, it was swept away by the Napoleonic wars. A small group of students and novices under the leadership of a Frenchman called Joseph Passerat spent years wandering and living in temporary accommodation. Clement eventually made his way to Vienna where he became a popular preacher, attracting young artists and intellectuals. All the time, he fought to save his Congregation. He was granted royal permission to found a community in Vienna. When the imperial decree of authorisation arrived in 1820, Clement was already dead and the decree was laid on his coffin.

And so to England

The pent-up energy of the preceding years of struggle finally found release as the Redemptorists spread throughout Europe with extraordinary rapidity. At the time of Hofbauer’s death, there was but a single community of twenty-seven members north of the Alps, living in a dilapidated former Carthusian monastery at Valsainte in

Switzerland. One professed Redemptorist lived in Vienna as Hofbauer's companion. A handful of others lived in twos and threes in the principality of Walachia and in Poland. During the next thirty years, the Redemptorists spread rapidly: to Alsace in 1829, Belgium in 1831, to the United States to care for German emigrants in 1832, then to Holland 1836. In the twenty-eight years between the death of Clement and the foundation of Clapham, the Congregation had grown to nearly 500 priests and Brothers, with over 120 students and novices.

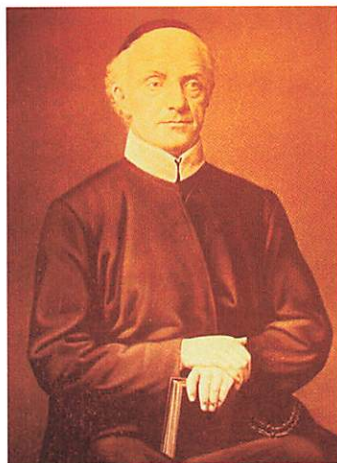
During a stay in Belgium in 1837, Dr Augustine Baines, vicar apostolic of the Western District, had occasion to meet the Redemptorist provincial superior, Frederick de Held. Conscious of the shortage of priests in his district, and especially in Wales, Baines pleaded with de Held for help but without success, since the number of active Redemptorists was still low and they were overwhelmed by the demand for parish mission work. Five years later, another appeal came, this time from Scotland. In response, de Held went to see the situation first hand. It was clear, however, that Scotland was out of the question, but this time, de Held took the initiative. He returned Bishop Baines's visit: the outcome of their meeting was an agreement to accept a small mission in Falmouth in Cornwall. Three Redemptorists, Frs Louis de Buggenoms, Auguste Lempfried and Brother Felician Dubucquoi, arrived in June 1843.



Fr Louis de Buggenoms :
Redemptorist Pioneer in Britain

It was hardly an auspicious beginning. Only de Buggenoms spoke English with relative fluency and the Redemptorists were shocked by the poverty of the mission. They were forced to accept responsibility for a geographically extensive pastoral area where only seven or eight people attended Sunday Mass. They set out to improve the standard of what was on offer. Catholics were virtually unknown in Cornwall, and for a short time, the curious flocked to the little chapel. De Buggenoms did his best to raise funds for the new mission among the old Catholic recusant families, and names like Lord Stourton, Sir Edward Vavasour and the Petre family figure among his benefactors. His sheer persistence paid off, and the congregation had grown to 170 in little over a year. Fr De Buggenoms realised that a school was essential, and he persuaded the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur he had known in Belgium, to make a foundation at nearby Penryn.

Another mission, at Hanley Castle in Worcestershire, was accepted the following year and looked more promising. A Catholic landlord, Thomas Hornyold, had built a church and residence. Another church in Great Marlow, Buckinghamshire, built by a convert Member of Parliament, Charles Scott Murray, was accepted in 1846. With pastoral responsibility for mission stations, there was little possibility of attempting their Congregation's tradition of parish mission preaching which some



Frederick de Held: Founder of Clapham

of the English bishops hoped they might take up. When de Held had finished his term as provincial superior in Belgium, he was sent to take over at Hanley Castle. He never arrived, as a visit to London concluded with the decision to install a community in Clapham.

A meeting of superiors in 1859 at Bischenberg, near Strasbourg, decreed that small mission stations should be abandoned and that any future foundations should aim to be in the style of the relatively large communities envisaged by the Rule, composed of twelve priests and seven brothers. With the establishment of communities at Bishop Eton (Liverpool) in 1851 and Limerick (Ireland) in 1853 without pastoral responsibility for Mass stations, that now seemed a reality. It was decided to withdraw from Falmouth, Hanley Castle and Great Marlow and to concentrate resources on Clapham, Bishop Eton and Limerick, eventually including Kinnoull in Perth. The three houses formed part of the Anglo-Dutch province from 1855 until ten years later, when they became the nucleus of an independent province.

An Austrian, a Belgian, a Russian, and an American

Clapham was constituted as a formal community, that is, a *collegium* under a rector, in 1850. The rector, Frederick de Held, was an Austrian. With him, there were five priests – a Belgian, Louis de Buggenoms, Vladimir Petcherine, a Russian, two Austrians, Wenceslaus Haklik and Germanus Kittel, a recently ordained American called Isaac Hecker, and three Belgian Brothers (Francis Funduer, Louis Dubois and Felician Dubucquoi), two novice Brothers (James Murclaer and Joseph Burowsky), and a postulant called Paul Faber.

De Held was the eldest at fifty-one. He was also the living link with Clement Hofbauer, the second founder of the Congregation. As a student, he had been a member of Clement's circle of young intellectuals and artists. He had carried Clement's coffin at his funeral and he entered the Congregation on the strength of the imperial decree of authorisation. He was professed in 1821 and ordained priest two years later. It was he who agreed to the first Redemptorist mission in England and eventually planned the Clapham house, so he can lay claim to being the founder of the London province. As provincial of Belgium from 1841 until 1847, the recent American foundation also came under his jurisdiction and he visited the American houses in 1845. De Held's early association with Clement gave him a significant role in the congregation and for much of his life, he was superior and advisor. He died in Holland in 1881.

When Louis de Buggenoms was appointed superior to the new English mission, he was twenty-seven years of age and a priest for just a few months. He had the advantage of good spoken English. De Buggenoms ministered in England until he was appointed superior of the new foundation in Limerick in 1853. He remained there for several years, and was instrumental in gathering candidates for the first convent of Redemptoristine Sisters in Dublin which opened in 1859. That same year, he went to the West Indies where he remained until 1874. He died in Brussels in 1882.

Vladimir Petcherine was the most colourful and talented of the early Redemptorists. Born near Kiev in the Ukraine in 1807, his intellectual prowess brought him to the universities of St Petersburg and Moscow. Having completed a doctorate in 1835, he was appointed professor of Greek philology at the University of Moscow. Tiring of the tightly controlled world of Tsarist Russia, Petcherine arranged to take sabbatical leave to travel outside Russia. While in Belgium in 1838, he came under the influence of a Redemptorist and converted to Roman Catholicism. He entered the Redemptorist novitiate in 1840 and, after a short course of theology, was ordained priest. He was sent to the Falmouth foundation and then to Clapham. He was the first Redemptorist to work in Ireland, having given a retreat to Sisters immediately prior to the first Limerick mission in 1851. His passionate nature, allied to a natural sympathy for the underdog, led to conflict in Ireland, including a trial on a charge of bible-burning, of which he was acquitted. It set him on a collision course with his superiors however. He left the Redemptorists in 1861, with the intention of entering a contemplative community. Having tried in turn the Carthusians and the Cistercians, he attempted to return to the Redemptorists. His superiors were adamant that they would not have him back. He spent the next twenty-four years working as a hospital chaplain in Dublin. In 1991, his remains were reburied in the Redemptorist plot in Dublin.

The only native speaker of English among them was the young American, Isaac Hecker. Hecker was born in New York in 1819, the child of German emigrants. He became a Catholic in 1844 and, shortly afterwards, entered the Redemptorists. He was sent to make his novitiate in St Trond in Belgium where he was professed in 1846. Theological studies followed in Holland, but the young man's health was fragile and he spent the last months of his course reading privately in Clapham, where he was eventually ordained by Cardinal Wiseman in 1849. He remained in Clapham for a few years but he was sent back to America in 1851. Like Petcherine, Hecker was not destined to remain in the Redemptorists. With some of his native-born American brethren, he felt that the Redemptorists in America should be addressing themselves to Americans, rather than simply attending to the spiritual

needs of the German emigrant population. As a result of a misunderstanding with his Roman superiors, Hecker was forcibly dispensed from his vows. He founded an independent religious community, the Society of St Paul, in 1858.

Even as the number of native English speakers in the community increased, life in a multinational community was not without its tensions. The visitation “recesses”, or points of observance requiring attention, occasionally drew attention to the obligation to speak only English in the house, and that “Fathers and Brothers will scrupulously take care not to annoy *confrères* ... about their nationality, even jocosely”. There was also the question of the social division between the better educated priests and the Brothers who looked after the practical matters of the house such as cooking and cleaning. Another visitation recess reminds the Fathers to remember “that the brothers are their brothers and they will strive to make themselves loved by them rather than feared ... they will refrain from imposing on them any more than is necessary”.

The First Generation

When they arrived in Falmouth, the Redemptorists were a virtually unknown religious congregation of foreigners. Within a few years of their arrival, they were attracting talented young men, many of whom were converts from the Oxford Movement. It is not easy to explain the attraction. In part, it is probably due to the impact of the writings of their founder, Alphonsus Liguori, that were beginning to become known. Newman’s entry to the Catholic Church was facilitated by Charles Russell, a young professor in Maynooth College who recommended him to read Alphonsus’ *Glories of Mary* as a way of understanding what the Oxford man regarded as the excesses of Catholic devotional life. The house at Clapham became a popular venue for retreats for young men, either pondering the decision to enter the Catholic Church or whether or not to pursue a religious vocation. Redemptorist community life was regarded as austere and may have appealed to idealistic young men. Finally there was the Redemptorist apostolate of parish missions that was beginning to have remarkable success in its outreach to urban and rural parishes alike.

The first generation of Redemptorists in Britain were a varied group of men. They included William Plunkett, an Irish aristocrat and army officer, John Furniss and Francis Weld, of old English Catholic or “recusant” origin, converts like Thomas Livius or working class men like Joachim Kelly who entered the Brotherhood. The four whose portraits follow here may not be typical but they illustrate the reach of the first generation of Redemptorists.

The Scottish Millionaire

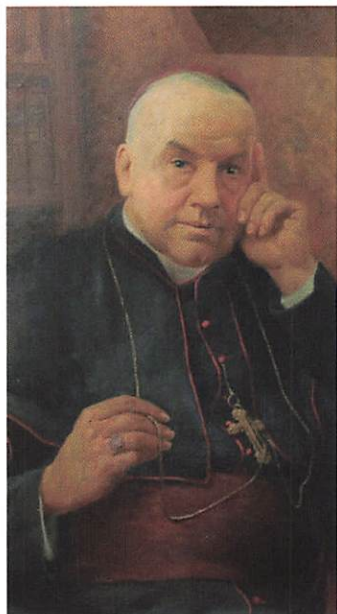
Edward Douglas (1819–98) was born into a wealthy and aristocratic Scottish family. Edward's father died when he was eleven years of age. As an only child, he inherited the sizeable fortune that had come to his father from his Queensbury relatives. Edward was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. John Henry Newman, a don of Oriel College, was the most controversial figure in the university at the time. The series of theological *Tracts for the Times* he had inspired began to appear in 1833. By the time of the appearance of the final Tract 90, *Remarks on Certain Passages in the Thirty Nine Articles*, which argued that the Anglican *Articles of Religion* could be interpreted in a way that was agreeable with Catholic doctrine, Edward Douglas had already left the university, having failed his final degree examinations.

Douglas had been a devout young man but he had avoided the Tractarian debates. This position changed with the debate that raged around Tract 90, and Douglas became convinced that his future lay in the Church of Rome, and towards the end of 1841, he travelled to Italy with a friend, Charles Scott Murray, who would later bring the Redemptorists to Great Marlow. While attending a ceremony at St Peter's Basilica, Scott Murray had put his umbrella into one of the confessionals for safety. When they returned to retrieve it after the ceremony, the confessional was locked. Murray had to leave Rome quickly, so Douglas undertook to recover the lost umbrella. His search led him to a Carmelite friary near St Peter's, where a friendship with a young priest ensued. Douglas decided to be received into the Catholic Church almost immediately, and he was baptised conditionally in 1842, some three years ahead of Newman.

His mother was horrified by the news, and she dispatched an Anglican clergyman to Rome in an attempt to reconvert him but without success. From the time of his conversion, Douglas had entertained the possibility of becoming a priest. It was a step he was reluctant to take, however, for fear of the additional pain it might cause his mother. Relations between mother and son were restored, and by June 1848, Douglas was ordained in Italy. Shortly after his ordination, he made a pilgrimage to the tomb of St Alphonsus at Pagani, south of Naples, to pray for guidance in deciding his future ministry as a priest. By the end of the year, he was in the Redemptorist novitiate at St Trond in Belgium, where he made his vows on the feast of the Immaculate Conception 1849. He was the first Briton to be professed in the congregation.



Fr Edward Douglas in old age



Robert Aston Coffin as Bishop of Southwark
Courtesy of Archdiocesan Archives, Southwark

By the end of February 1850, Fr Douglas returned to England as a member of the newly-founded Clapham community. Thanks to his personal wealth, he was able to clear the outstanding debt on the church. He was part of the first Redemptorist community in Mount St Alphonsus, Limerick, where, it was hoped, he might again dip into his ample money to cover the cost of building the church and monastery. His superiors had other plans, however. The Redemptorists had been ordered by the Pope to transfer the residence of their general from Pagani, near Naples, to Rome, and a suitable house was needed for the purpose. Douglas again obliged, and built the church and monastery on the Via Merulana. He would later cover the cost of the foundations at Perth in his native Scotland and at Cortona in Italy.

A man of Douglas's background was bound to attract attention in Rome. His opinion in matters relating to Britain, and especially Scotland, was sought by the Holy See. He became a point of reference for English visitors to Rome, especially converts trying to work through the final stages of their entry to the Catholic Church. He served his Congregation as a general councillor, as provincial of the Roman province and as rector of the house on the Via Merulana. When the Army of Italian Reunification invaded Rome in 1870 and confiscated much church-owned property, Douglas saved the house by running up the Union Flag over it and claiming it as British property. Edward Douglas died in Rome in 1898.

The Oxford Vicar

Robert Aston Coffin (1819–85) was the eldest of five children of a prosperous merchant family in Brighton. As a child, he had wondered whether he should become an opera singer or a bishop, but decided the matter by going on to read theology at Oxford. After ordination in 1843, he was appointed vicar of St Mary Magdalene's, one of the more fashionable churches in Oxford. It was inevitable that Coffin should become embroiled in the theological debates of Oxford at the time, and the young vicar was soon drawn into Newman's circle.

Coffin's moment of crisis came when he was summoned to the bedside of a dying parishioner. He ministered to her according to the rites of the *Book of Common Prayer* but, as he began the words of absolution, the woman interrupted him: "I believe you don't know whether you are a priest or not." In consternation, Coffin asked her what she meant, and when he discovered she believed that the true Christian priesthood only existed in the Catholic Church, he went to fetch the Catholic priest for her who heard her confession before she died.

Oxford gossip about the incident did nothing to enhance Coffin's standing or to allay his doubts about the nature of the Church of England. Newman had, by this

time, withdrawn to the village of Littlemore to escape the storm following the publication of Tract 90 and he entered the Roman Catholic Church in October 1845. Coffin continued to hesitate, but was received in December. After much hesitation about which religious community to join, Newman decided to establish a branch of the Oratory of St Philip Neri, especially for converts. He assembled a group of six prospective novices, including Coffin, in Rome in early 1847. Coffin was ordained priest later that year. After their novitiate, they returned to England and established their community at Maryvale, near Birmingham. Coffin's heart was not in the Oratory, and tensions were beginning to show between himself and Newman. By 1851, Coffin had left the Oratory for the Redemptorist novitiate in Belgium, where he was professed in February 1852.

Coffin's talents and social contacts with both old recusant families and many of the new Oxford converts marked him out for leadership in the English Church. When the Anglo-Dutch province divided in 1865, he was appointed provincial of the London province, which included the houses in Ireland. He held that office until he was nominated bishop of Southwark in 1882. His episcopate lasted a mere three years. He died in April 1885 in the Redemptorist house of studies at Teignmouth in Devon that he had founded and where he is buried.

The Cambridge Scholar

Thomas Edward Bridgett (1829–99) was the youngest of the first group of Englishmen to enter the Redemptorists. He was born in Derby, the child of a successful silk-manufacturer. His father was a Baptist and his mother a Unitarian, so Thomas was not baptised until he requested it himself during his school days. In 1847, he entered St John's College, Cambridge.

Bridgett was not as exposed at Cambridge to the feverish religious disputes that wracked Oxford, but he was reading theology with a view to entering the ministry of the Church of England. Apart from some holidays abroad, his contacts with Catholicism were slight. As he departed for the long vacation at the end of the academic year of 1850, he remarked to a friend: "It is not likely that I shall return to Cambridge, but if I do, I shall be a thorough Protestant, and not a High Church Anglican." In May, he attended some of Newman's *Lectures on the difficulties of Anglicans* in London. By June, he was taking steps to be received into the Roman Catholic Church at the London Oratory. Bridgett was twenty-one years of age. As he had foreseen, he did not return to Cambridge. He was prevented from taking his degree without acknowledging the Anglican *Articles of Religion* and *Royal Supremacy*, which, as a Catholic, he was unable to do.



Fr Bridgett was well known as both preacher and writer

Soon after this, he made a retreat at the Redemptorist house in Hanley Castle. He had entered Cambridge intending to be ordained. The vocation to priesthood remained, but it could now only be fulfilled in the Catholic Church. He felt little attraction to Newman's Oratory as he believed its members were straining too hard to be ultra-Catholic and, "I wished to be thoroughly Catholic, but among those to whom it came easily and harmoniously." His reading of the life of St Alphonsus and a meeting with Louis de Buggenoms steered him towards the Redemptorists. In September 1850, after a mere three months as a Catholic, he was on his way to the novitiate in Belgium along with a young Irishman, William Plunkett, son of the Earl of Fingall.

Bridgett received the fullest Catholic theological education of all the converts of his generation. It included five years of ecclesiastical studies in Wittem, in Holland. He returned to England to become a member of the Clapham community in 1856. The years 1862 to 1871 were spent in Ireland as a missionary and retreat director, especially to clergy. He was an outstanding success as rector of Mount St Alphonsus in Limerick (1865–71), where he introduced the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family, founded a Catholic lending library and was responsible for the building of the chapel in honour of the Mother of Perpetual Help. He returned to Clapham as rector from 1871 to 1874. Further terms followed as rector in Limerick (1881 to 1884), and of the house of studies at Teignmouth (1893 to 1894).

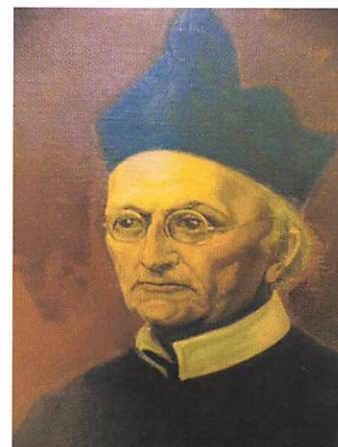
When ill-health prevented him from going on missions and retreats, Bridgett dedicated his time to writing on subjects of theological and historical interest. When in Clapham, he spent many hours reading in the British Museum, but he was not ashamed to use helpers to cull a vast amount of literature. His writings display an encyclopaedic knowledge of English Catholic history, for example *Our Lady's Dowry: Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in England* (1875), *The History of the Holy Eucharist in Great Britain* (1881), *The Life of Blessed John Fisher* (1888). His reputation as a writer introduced him to a growing circle of intellectual Catholics in Britain including Frederic Baron von Hügel, the lay apologist and theologian, who became a regular correspondent. Thomas Bridgett died in Clapham in 1899.

The Recusant

Edmund Vaughan was two years older than Thomas Bridgett, but a year junior to him in profession. He was a member of the Vaughan family of Courtfield who had continued to be loyal to the Catholic faith throughout the penal period. Edmund had been educated at Stonyhurst by the Jesuits. He taught for some time in Oscott College before applying to join the seminary. When he had reached deaconal orders, he applied to join the Redemptorists and, after his novitiate in Belgium, he was professed in 1852 along with Robert Coffin.

Vaughan then embarked on a lengthy ministry as a preacher of parish missions from the communities of Clapham and Bishop Eton. In 1867, he became superior of St Mary's, Kinnoull, near Perth, the first monastery to be opened in Scotland since the Reformation. He then ventured further afield. In 1882, with four priests and two Brothers, he left to establish the Redemptorists in Australia, where scattered settlements of Catholics, many of them poor Irish, made the parish mission apostolate attractive to the bishops. Edmund's brother, William, was bishop of Plymouth. The next generation of the family gave even more of its children to the service of the Church. One nephew, Roger, a Benedictine, became archbishop of Sydney, another, Herbert, cardinal archbishop of Westminster, Francis, bishop of Menevia, and a fourth, John, auxiliary bishop of Salford. This was in addition to two others who became priests, and five nieces who became nuns. Edmund was proposed as archbishop of Sydney in succession to his nephew, but his nomination was resisted by the clergy of the diocese who were Irish in the main and wanted one of their own.

Fr Vaughan returned to England and became provincial in 1894. He died at Bishop Eton, Liverpool, in 1908. Edmund Vaughan was a gifted hymn writer. Originally composed for use on parish missions, many of his hymns are still sung today, for example: *God of Mercy and Compassion*, *Look down O Mother Mary*, and *O Bread of Heaven*.



Fr Edmund Vaughan belonged to a distinguished old Catholic family, many of whose members gave service to the Church

The Redemptorists Today

Although the decline in numbers entering religious life has affected the Redemptorists as much as every other religious congregation in Britain, it nevertheless tries to be faithful to the tradition it has received.

The Redemptorists have always prided themselves in being “an order of preachers”. Even in the ordinary ministry of their own churches, preaching has an important place. The parish mission apostolate continues to bring Redemptorists, along with lay co-workers, to parishes to preach a mission, retreat or novena for a week or more. Missions can be a time of renewal and celebration for a parish.

Although parish work was not encouraged by the early Redemptorist Rule, it has been a feature of the apostolic life of the London Province from the beginning. It currently runs parishes in London (Clapham), Birmingham (Erdington) and Liverpool (Bishop Eton). Alphonsus wanted the members of his congregation to be close to ordinary people and to share the joys and sorrows, the hopes and disappointments of daily life with them. That remains a central feature of parish ministry – from the joyful welcoming of new life in baptism, to the celebration of death in the hope of resurrection that is the mark of the Christian funeral. Redemptorists are involved in other pastoral projects, such as chaplains to hospitals and prisons. The Redemptorists run a renewal centre, where lay-folk, religious and clergy can recharge their spiritual and intellectual batteries, on the edge of the highlands at Kinnoull.

The first overseas mission to spring from the London Province was Australia. When the Province was divided, Australia became part of the Irish Province and eventually an independent Province in its own right. London was not left without a mission, since already in 1912, it had sent the first Redemptorists to South Africa. By 1989, it had done well enough, in terms of local vocations to the priesthood and Brotherhood, to become an independent Province. The region of Zimbabwe remains united to the mother Province. Today it has three communities and an increasing number of students.

For over fifty years, Redemptorists of the London Province have undertaken what Redemptorists call “the apostolate of the pen”. A community at Chawton is dedicated to the production of various kinds of print media for the service of the Gospel and liturgy. They include books of reflection and popular theology, aids for the celebration of the sacraments and the different stages of life’s journey. The members of the publications team are not exclusively Redemptorists: lay men and women also dedicate their skills to the ever diversifying work of publication.



A Place of Welcome

London's unique place in the world has made Clapham, since the beginning, a place to which Redemptorists throng. For some, it has been a stopping-off point on their missionary journeys between countries or continents. For others, it has been a place to pursue specialist education or training in theology, languages, administration or technical skills.

For many, notably for brethren from the European mainland, it has been a place of refuge in difficult times. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, wars, revolutions and changes in the political climate forced many religious groups to leave their homelands. We have seen in this narrative how the first Redemptorists to come to England included men who were forced to leave Austria by revolution in the 1840s. During the 1870s, a series of laws and restrictions on religious orders in the newly unified Germany led to the *Kulturkampf* or the "cultural struggle". Some of the Redemptorists sought refuge in England. Two or three decades later, it was the turn of France. The laws declaring separation of Church and state in France in 1905 included a series of laws forbidding Religious to live together or to hold property. As a result, many were forced to flee. Many found refuge in Belgium and elsewhere but a sizeable number came to Britain.

To all of them, Clapham opened its doors and provided a place of welcome for at least a time. It may be a relatively quiet London parish, but Clapham is known around the Redemptorist world.

