

We Shall Remember Them: Our World War One Chaplains¹

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The theme of this Conference is Connecting Past Present and Future and with the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of World War One in 2014, and the many projects and commemorations being organised, it was fitting for the Marist Archives to also honour our participants. That, of course, meant we needed to collate information about them hence the impetus ...

The Impetus

While some Marists had served during World War One before entering the Society of Mary, we initially limited this current project to ordained priests and then narrowed this selection to those who were appointed to the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces (NZEF).



Figure 1: Marists who served as chaplains with the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces.

Within Marist circles, there has been the belief that there were eight Marists who had served as chaplains during World War One:

Fr Thomas Segrief sm

Fr Segrief was the first Roman Catholic Chaplain to serve and saw service throughout the whole war. He sailed with the Advance Party to Samoa, spent time at Trentham and Featherston Camps and ministered on both hospital ships *Maheno* and *Marama*. His time on the *Maheno* coincided with the Gallipoli campaign. He joined the New Zealand Expeditionary Force with the 23rd Reinforcements, serving in England and on the western front.

He was awarded the following medals: 1914-1915 Star, British War Medal 1914-1918, Victory Medal 1914-1919, NZ Colonial Auxiliary Forces Decoration, Long and Efficient Service Medal and NZ Territorial Service Medal. (Photo 2 – left)

Fr Alexander F McDonald sm

Leaving Waimate with one of Fr Aubry's violins, Fr McDonald accompanied the 8th Reinforcements in November 1915. He was stationed for his entire service in Egypt where he ministered to the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade. On occasion, he also brought succour to the Australians who were also part of the ANZAC Mounted Division. (Photo 5)

Fr Nicholas Moloney sm

Fr Moloney was commissioned into the New Zealand Chaplains' Department in April 1914 and was appointed to the position of Roman Catholic Chaplain on the hospital ship *Marama* on her first charter, second charter second sailing, third charter and fourth charter. He missed the first sailing of the second charter, as he had been posted to Trentham Camp. In addition to his World War One medals, Fr Moloney also received the New Zealand Territorial Service Medal in 1930. (Photo 2 – right)

Fr Jean Barra sm

Initially appointed Honorary Chaplain to the Wanganui Irish Rifles on 23 May 1910, Fr Barra was called up by the French Army in 1916. With the support of Fr James McKenna, Senior Catholic Chaplain, and the approval of the Minister of Defence, Fr Barra was appointed Military Chaplain (Roman Catholic) to the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces (18th Reinforcements). Fr Barra saw service in northern France in 1917 and 1918 at the New Zealand General Hospital at Walton on Thames. (Photo 6)

Fr Francis Bartley sm

Fr Bartley was Curate at Nelson when he was appointed to leave with

the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (21st Reinforcements). He served in northern France in the second half of 1917. Unfortunately, health issues led to him being invalided back to New Zealand. However, he continued in the Chaplain's Department, being awarded the New Zealand Service and Long and Efficient Service Medals in 1930 and the Efficiency Decoration in 1935. (Photo 3)

Fr Célestin Lacroix sm

Fr Lacroix became a Chaplain to the 13th Regiment of the Territorial Force in June 1916. When another chaplain was required for service abroad, Fr Lacroix was nominated; however, at age 49 he was four years past the age limit for chaplains and required the special approval of the Minister of Defence to take up the position. He was a Curate in Greymouth when he left on board the *Tofua* in April 1917 (25th Reinforcements).² Fr Lacroix's service was spent at the New Zealand Stationary Hospital at Wisques, Pas-de-Calais, France.

On route to taking up his post at the Hospital, Fr Lacroix's train was involved in an accident. Fr Lacroix assisted in rescuing other passengers, which led to the Army Commander recording his appreciation for gallant conduct in the 2nd Army Routine Orders of 5 November 1917. (Photo 1)

Fr Michael Murphy sm

Fr Murphy's first religious appointment was to Timaru from where he left in November 1917 for Trentham before embarking with the 33rd Reinforcements, though being commissioned in the New Zealand Chaplains' Department in June 1912. He was initially stationed in England, leaving for the western front in June 1918, where he completed his duty. He was given official leave to visit Rome before returning to New Zealand in September 1919 on the *Remuera*. (Photo 4)

Fr Joseph Cullen sm

When Archives New Zealand started releasing the digitised copy of files from the Military Personnel Files series (18805), we found the accessions for the military history sheets, but could not find one for Fr Cullen. Why could not we find his? If we could not find his, could there be also be others missing?

Finding Fr Cullen

The first connection to make was with other records on Archway, Archives New Zealand's database. The answer was to be found in series 8653 – Army Lists and Registers of Commissions [record group].

Perusing the Register, answered one of our initial questions, "Were there other Marists who had been chaplains?" In all, another 14 were found; of those nine had territorial or World War One files on Archway.

There was Fr Cullen on the list, with his official register number, but still no record.

Fr Cullen, along with his brother Frank, had featured in Haigh's book³ as being the only brothers to serve as chaplains. But this did not help find his record.

The Wellington Sole Archivists' Group had visited NZ Defence Force Archives in 2013, so contact was made with the Registrar, Christine Edney to see if she could shed any light. Fr Cullen's date of birth had been incorrectly input into the system. Christine very kindly sent us a copy of his personnel file and added it to the pile for digitisation.

This informed us that Fr Cullen had served solely within New Zealand. We learnt from this that military history sheets were created only for those who had served with the NZEF.

Archdiocesan Archives Wellington

The equivalent of today's Military Ordinariate was run from the Archbishopric in Wellington. To be appointed chaplain, support was required from both the Marist Provincial as well as from the Senior Roman Catholic Chaplain, Monsignor John McKenna, Parish Priest of Masterton.⁴

Archbishop Francis Redwood and Coadjutor Archbishop Thomas O'Shea were both Marists. Many chaplains, including Bishop Cleary of Auckland wrote to them during World War One. We were fortunate to find correspondence from four of the seven Marists who served with NZEF.

It was in this collection that the next mystery appeared and more connections were needed to be made to solve it.

A tale of two photos

In the Archives of the Archdiocese of Wellington, there is a photo⁵ which has a striking likeness to one in our collection, which had always been known as Fr James Joseph McMenamin's burial service.⁶ Fr McMenamin had been the Parish Priest at Petone and was killed by a shell at Messines on 9 June 1917 while attending to the burial of a fallen soldier.

The photos (on next page) show the same people, but are they at a different event or even location?

Fr Raphael Vandaele, Parish Priest of Nieppe, had organised Fr McMenamin's burial in the parish priests' vault.⁷ Could he be the unidentified priest in the photo?

Fr Barra, in a letter to Archbishop O'Shea, had described the All Souls' Day mass that he had organised, without specifying the location.



Figure 2: Archdiocese of Wellington Archives (Box 381 – Military Ordinariate: World War 1 Chaplains / Taranaki-Waikato Wars).

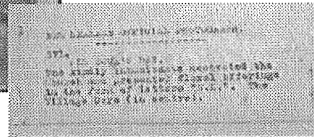


Figure 3: Marist Archives Wellington – PSC700.

As the photo from the Archdiocesan Archives had “Official Photograph” affixed to the back, Archway and the online collection from Alexander Turnbull Library were scoured with a variety of search terms.

Connecting with France

At the same time, information was sought in France. The parish of Nieppe is within the Diocese of Lille. Did the Diocesan Archives of Lille hold any records of the burial or the mass? Did they have a photo of Fr Vandaele to confirm whether he was the parish priest in the photo?



Figure 4: L'abbé Vandaele, Diocesan Archives of Lille.

Yes to the burial, no to the mass. Yes to a photo;⁸ this confirmed that Fr Vandaele was not the priest in the photo. The Archives holds the historic parish register that Fr Vandaele maintained during the war.⁹ He lists the Roman Catholic chaplains who were in Nieppe in 1917 and documents Fr McMenamin's burial in the parish priests' vault.

Further Internet searches identified Niepkerke: Nieppe Historical Society. A local newspaper article had mentioned that the Society had access to the diaries of an inhabitant who detailed life in Nieppe during the war. Was there any mention of Fr McMenamin's burial or mass? Attending mass for the troops was mentioned, but nothing specific.¹⁰

A connection through Niepkerke



Figure 5 (left): The grave of New Zealand army chaplain James Joseph McMenamin, killed in World War 1, France. Royal New Zealand Returned and Services Association: New Zealand official negatives, World War 1914-1918. Refl 1/2-012808-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. Figure 6 (right): The parish priests' vault at Nieppe, 2014. Photo taken by Nathalie Fache, Archivist of Nieppe.

was made with the town's archivist, Nathalie Fache, who indicated that the All Souls' Day photos were not taken in Nieppe.¹¹ However, she was very happy to receive information and a photo about Fr McMenamin, which will be included in the town's information on the fallen.¹²

A photo taken by Henry Armytage Saunders of Fr McMenamin's resting place was shared with Nathalie, who took this photo from a similar angle 97 years after Saunders.

All Souls' Day Service

The search of Alexander Turnbull Library had identified that the All Souls' Day mass photos had been taken in the village of Selles, Pas-de-Calais. A request was sent to the Diocesan Archives of Arras as to whether they had a record of the event and a photo of the parish priest.

No photo existed of the parish priest, but Fr Adolphe Roger had written a report at the request of his Bishop reporting on the parish during the war. In the report, mention was made of the presence of New Zealand troops and the All Souls' Day mass.¹³

Fr Barra described in vivid detail the service in his letter to Archbishop O'Shea dated 7 November 1917:¹⁴



Figure 7: Church service commemorating All Soul's Day in Selle, France. Royal New Zealand Returned and Services Association: New Zealand official negatives, World War 1914-1918. Ref: 1/2-013003-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

The parade came off all right; and on Monday 5th November, at 10 am the Holy Sacrifice was celebrated for the souls of our Heroes. The church was beautifully decorated. Black hangings covered the walls round; a large black cross stood well at the back of the altar; the catafalque was draped with a French flag, the flags of France and Britain posted in mourning at the four corners of it. In front of the sanctuary a large cross made of flowers, with the letters NZ made equally of flowers, gave to all the meaning of the ceremony. Over the sanctuary arch a banderolle was hung with these words upon it, "Eternal Rest Grant to Them, o Lord". Against the four pillars of the nave could be seen in large silver letters the four names of New Zealand fame in this war: Gallipoli, Somme, Messines, Ypres. The Curé sang the mass and the parish choir executed the liturgical singing with great sweetness and devotion. All the boys went to Holy Communion, led by their officers who knelt first at the Holy Table. It was a magnificent act of faith which brought tears to the eyes of the French people present. Fathers Bartley and Segrief had come to help me and the work went on quickly and well: I feel sure that God was pleased with the men. After a short sermon the men marched out of the church into the cemetery where the burial service was solemnly read for the dead who in the line have never had the blessing of the Holy Church over their sacred remains. It was most impressive! Four priests stood there at the foot of the Cross of Salvation, by the side of the immortal flag of France in the hands of a veteran wounded at Verdun, and all our noble NZ Catholic soldiers around. Angels of heaven, who witnessed the faith and devotion of those men, the religious silence of heroes as the glorious words of the Ritual were read out, write that scene down in the records of God! Carry to the trenches the protecting blessing of Christ and give joy to the bones of those who now sleep there, their last long sleep! "Exultabunt ossa humiliata!"¹⁵

Connecting with the Community

Our initial outreach efforts have been the memorial display in the Marist Archives and an article in the Marist Messenger, with others in the pipeline. The link to the online article has been shared with the archives in France, which contributed information.

Where the records are

In order to create the memorial display which tells the story of our chaplains, we have had contact with the following organisations:

Marist Archives Rome

St Patrick's College Wellington Archives

Archives New Zealand

New Zealand Defence Force Archives
 Alexander Turnbull Library
 Archdiocese of Wellington Archives
 Diocese of Lille Archives
 Diocese of Arras Archives
 Nieperkerke: Nieppe Historical Society
 Auckland Museum
 New Zealand Military History Society
 Archives départementales des Côtes d'Armor

This whole project has demonstrated the rewards of archives keeping in that we only had part of the jigsaw and by connecting with other archives institutions we were able to fill in the missing gaps. The Marists themselves have been pleasantly surprised by the information which has been uncovered about their early confreres.

Endnotes

1. Paper based on a presentation to the ARANZ Conference, Christchurch, 2014.
2. "Celestine Lacroix." *Cenotaph Database*. Accessed December 2, 2014. <http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/Cenotaph/AdvancedSearch.aspx>.
3. Bryant Haigh, J. *Men of Faith and Courage: The Official History of New Zealand's Army Chaplains*. Auckland, New Zealand: The Word Publishers Ltd, 1983.
4. Redwood sm, +F. Archbishop Francis Redwood sm to Dean Patrick Smyth sm, September 6, 1915. PHL1/97. Marist Archives. Wellington, New Zealand.
 Smyth sm, P. Dean Patrick Smyth sm to Archbishop Francis Redwood sm, October 2, 1915. PHL1/98-99. Marist Archives. Wellington, New Zealand.
5. New Zealand Official Photograph: 371 All Souls' Day. Photograph. Box 381 – Military Ordinariate: World War 1 Chaplains / Taranaki-Waikato Wars. Archdiocese of Wellington Archives. Wellington, New Zealand.
6. Known as Fr James Joseph McMenamin's burial service. Photograph. 1917. PSC700. Marist Archives. Wellington, New Zealand.
7. Barra sm, J. Fr Jean Barra sm to Archbishop Thomas O'Shea sm, June 11, 1917. Box 381 – Military Ordinariate: World War 1 Chaplains/ Taranaki-Waikato Wars. Archdiocese of Wellington Archives. Wellington, New Zealand.
8. *L'abbé Vandaele*. Photograph. c.1910. Archives Diocésaines de Lille. Lille, France.
9. Parish of St Martin, Nieppe. Parish history register. c.1903-c.1920. Archives Diocésaines de Lille. Lille, France.
10. Delpierre, J-C. "Nieppe Pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale." E-mail message to author. May 28, 2014.
11. Fache, N. "Photo." E-mail message to author. May 30, 2014.
12. Fache, N. "Bonsoir." E-mail message to author. August 15, 2014.
13. Roger, A. Report to Mgr Julien, Bishop of Arras on the history of the Diocesan parishes during World War One. c.1918. Archives Diocésaines d'Arras. Arras, France.
14. Barra sm, J. Fr Jean Barra sm to Archbishop Thomas O'Shea sm, November 7, 1917. Box 381 – Military Ordinariate: World War 1 Chaplains/ Taranaki-Waikato Wars. Archdiocese of Wellington Archives. Wellington, New Zealand.
15. Humbled bones shall rejoice, *Psalms* 51:8.