

# FROM LUXURY TO HARDSHIP

## Edmund gives up his wealth to found a new Society.

*« The half-hour's explanation of the Catechism I hold to be the most salutary part of the system. It's the most laborious to the teachers; however, if it was ten times what it is I must own we are amply paid in seeing such a reformation in the children »*

*Edmund Rice*

## THE QUIET REVOLUTIONARY

AT LAST EDMUND sat and surveyed his little community. The two of them had arrived only this morning and already they had settled in to the life in the room above the stable. They seemed to have had a good session with the boys and that was the test. Poor boys! They are tough, and wild, and starving: we must feed them!

The despair of the last few days! If only friends would try to understand: but how could they since they did not understand his vision - the urge to do something with his life for Christ?

It was hard when the two helpers left. « Not for all the money you have, » they said. It took more than money to face his boys but they had a right to their religion. Now he had to face the objections of the people of New Street who did not want the « hoards of ragged urchins » passing their doors each day.

But now he saw hope for the urchins and he would see that they would soon have a proper school, the best school, and he and his little band of helpers would work and pray and lead lives for the glory of God and for the boys.

Was he mad to start in a stable? How could he explain that it was part of his aim to live like the people with whom he worked and whom he loved? Deprived of the wealth and power he had gained in Waterford over the past twenty-five years he was setting out

« naked to follow a naked Christ. » He was starting a revolution; taking a radical step because he believed in the dignity of the person and the beauty of the human soul. On account of his love for the poor he acted and would continue to act because he realised that this was God's will.



## MOUNT SION

After some time in New Street Edmund set about the next part of his plan to set up a religious society. In June 1802 he commenced to build a monastery where he and his followers could live a full religious life.

Although Edmund had got encouragement at first he was now opposed by the Bishop Dr. Hussey who asked Edmund to sign over his property. The test of following the will of God is obedience to authority and Edmund stood this test as one would expect from a man of his courage. Without question he handed over the deeds to the Bishop with the request to be allowed to live in part of the building so that he could continue his work for his poor boys. The Bishop, seeing his humility and dedication, blessed his work and named the new monastery and school « Mount Sion ».

## GROWTH IN SORROW

Soon the new community began to grow and the Brothers lived hard lives and carried out a staggering work-load. The hours in school were long, and at night they instructed adults and young people. At weekends they prepared the children for the sacraments and at the same time they continued the charities to which Edmund had been attached for many years.

The worst cross Edmund had to bear was caused by misunderstanding. Some wrote condemning the work he was doing. Others wrote lies about him and his Society and he was also complained about to the Bishop and to the Pope.

In spite of all this Edmund applied for and got permission from the Bishop for his new rule adapted from the rule of the Presentation Sisters. On the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, Edmund and seven companions made annual vows in the presence of the Bishop, Dr. Power in 1808.