

The illness that Edel experienced, especially on her many long journeys to mission stations, did not stop her achieving her goal to serve Jesus and Mary in bringing the faith to the African people. She was no slave to illness but drove on in love with her God. Her persistence and commitment to the Gospel was an example to all. She summed up her whole approach to suffering by saying: "To suffer for Our Lord is my greatest joy."

In the great example of Edel's self-sacrificing life, Fr. Littleton continued to tell of an incident in his aunt's home on a St. Patrick's Day, seeing a couple of Jehovah Witnesses going door-to-door, and marvelling at their commitment. Then he remembered, as a priest in Tipperary, rising at 4.30 am to celebrate Holy Mass for a group of legionaries going on PPC to England, to do precisely the same door to door evangelisation in the spirit of Venerable Edel Quinn!

The homily given on the 50th anniversary by Rev. Fr. Terence McLoughlin, O.P.

*"As you sent me into the world
I have sent them into the world"*

I come here for a very special reason tonight - I come here not to preach to you, I come here to sneak in and get one message across, which is a personal one - the reason I've come to know Edel. And if you permit me to tell you with gratitude that in the year of 1983 I had been in Lisbon, Portugal for 36 years, and towards the end of summer, I collapsed sick. It was totally against all my style of life and doctors were puzzled.

They took all the tests and I was diagnosed - and the message was sent home, unknown to me, to my family, that I had Myloma and had six months to live. I discovered one night that I was being given chemotherapy - I had not been told that and it was a night that I had to think about. Meanwhile two Dominican sisters came to my bedside and they said: "we're going to pray to Edel Quinn for you." And they

went back to their convents, and Fatima took it up, Ireland took it up, South Africa took it up. The children in school had a sticker on their desks with the prayer which you read every day for the beatification of Edel. And I was taken home in a wheelchair to die.

The chemotherapy continued, the specialist that I was to see was down sick and could not appear for months. But when the tests were finally taken again, I was completely cleared of sickness. Now, I have no forensic proof that Edel Quinn intervened, but I personally appealed to no other heavenly patron but to her and through her to Mary and through Mary to Jesus. Having said that, I say thanks to Edel, and let's get on with the main part of what I have to say.

When I read what Edel had done in Africa, it is too puzzling for me to open even an atlas and to come to terms with these little places that she had visited under great hardships, especially in the rainy season, especially cadging lifts on trucks, on cars, in her own little "rolls royce", combating the muds of winter, being muddied from head to toe and catching all that Africa has to offer in the way of sickness - of dysentery, of malaria, of fever - and knowing that in her youth and in her young womanhood she was already a condemned woman.

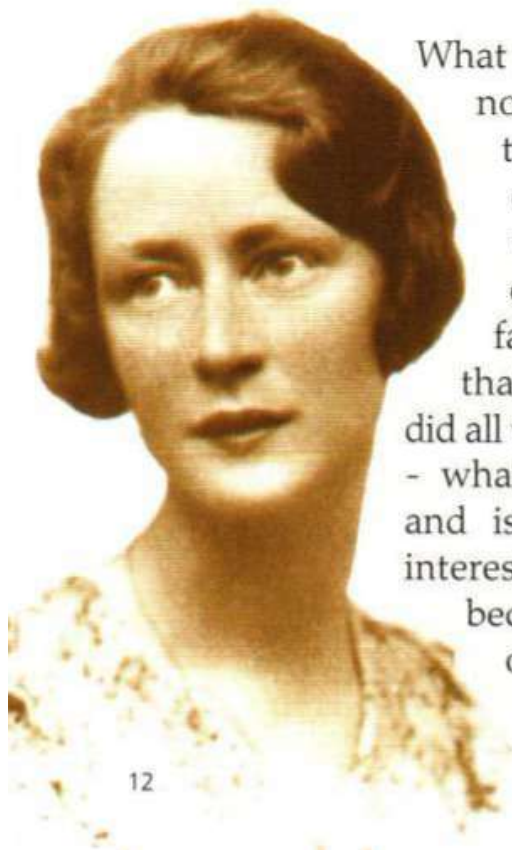
The doctors had given up on Edel Quinn and she should never, in all prudence, have been sent to Africa but she fought her way there, against dear old Fr. Magennis who said it was folly and foolishness to send her there; but she did go there because she knew where she was going. All her life Edel knew where she was going.

What interests me is not the vast travel, is not the extension work, is not the extraordinarily fatiguing work that Edel Quinn did all through her life - what interests me and is of perennial interest to all of us, because it touches on your life and on mine, is

what caused her, what gave her the strength and the coil of energy to take on this work. When God chooses his apostles he picks them very young, picks them within the family, picks them in schooling, picks them on the day of First Communion.

Edel was no ordinary girl, although she would pass for one. When she came to live in Dublin she was fashionably dressed like other girls of her time. There was no dowdiness in her dress and there was no lack of gaiety or life - she bubbled with life - she danced, she played the piano, she played tennis and anything you may wish. She swam and she was the most popular at any party. All the time she had a level of life, a depth of life which nobody guessed and which she herself tried to conceal.

Somewhere, and we cannot trace where, some sister or some parent or some influence had taught her that there is a God, not just whom one obeys but whom one walks with - that there is a God we follow for life and that it is good to be with our God, and that Holy Communion is the nearest on earth we will ever attain to being with him! So that every Sunday at every Mass she was to be found, and every weekday she was at 7 o'clock Mass and then, with no breakfast whatever except an apple in her back pocket, she went forth to work.



Maria Legionis

A girl like the rest who had a beautiful offer of marriage and who coloured and blushed at the thought of the embarrassment it would cause this young Frenchman who proposed to her in Jury's hotel - not knowing that she had already promised her life to another - to God.

She would have been a Poor Clare Sister if her health had held out. But her health did not hold out because God chooses them and knows where to put them. And her Poor Clare convent was not to be in Belfast. Her cloister was not there. Her cloister was the wide world - she had learned something from our Catherine of Sienna, that you do not need, necessarily, to live in a cell, you take your cell with you and that cell is open as the wide world. It is not really a cell, and not bound by a wall - it is only a cell in the sense that you are alone with God.

Edel relished and thrived and revelled in this aloneness with God. And it was from that strength of aloneness with God that she reached out to human beings and saw them in their dignity, in their nobility, saw them in their poverty, loved them in their poverty and went out to each and every one of them. And it was for that reason she poured out her life, a dying candle guttering out, until every ounce of that life had gutted away and the flame which spent itself over eight years in Africa guttered to extinction.

I am not interested, as I say, in her peregrinations through Central and

East Africa. I am interested in the principles that guided her. I am interested in what happens when one is near to God. I am interested in the fact that instinctively she obeyed God in everything. In Chapter 5 of the Acts it says: "*The holy spirit is given to the one who obeys*", and she learned to obey and she had the Holy Spirit. Wasn't it strange that even her family noticed the wisdom the child had, whilst yet a child, - they called her granny - because she had a Christian instinct of what to do.

She had a Christian instinct, an infallible instinct and when people would try to dispute this and that, she knew. She would never reveal her sources; she kept that secret of the King - the intimacy of the King to herself, only when people almost forced her hand.

Edel also had this gift of serenity. Because when she discovered the Legion of Mary, which was the great weapon which she used in life, she discovered there that extraordinarily simple secret of Mary - of consecration, of dedication, of commitment total to God, through Jesus through Mary, and solemnly she asked her confessor and director about this - would it be alright to take a vow, giving all to Mary, giving her life's work, giving her sufferings, giving even the merits she might possibly obtain - and Fr. Culligan said "yes, I believe it would." And he knew at that moment that she had long since done it.

WHEN YOUR LIFE IS GIVEN TO GOD NOTHING CAN HAPPEN.

When we hand over our lives to God but totally, nothing can happen that life. It is indestructible, even though a man be persecuted, even though he die, it is indestructible. The serenity that comes from the fact that God's life is hidden in the hollow of God's hand and nothing can touch it - nothing at all can touch it. Also, the joy that comes from being close to God - because I was thinking of the beautiful image that we have at home. Many of us have televisions and many of them have rented televisions. The man with the rented television is a lot happier because he doesn't give a hang what happens to it, because it is only rented, and if it goes wrong he will send for the maker and he will get a better one.

When your life is given to God nothing can happen. The serenity that comes from that! Nobody can browbeat you. This accounted for the fearlessness and the optimism of Edel Quinn. The fact that she was one bubble of joy, that she was happiness all through.

Her life and death took place fifty years ago. Her works in Africa are only being discovered. Book after book - and wonderful books they are, and they should be read, and it is due

to my interest in Edel Quinn I began to read her books and realise the depth of spirituality behind her - the real life beneath the apparent life, is the real riches of Edel Quinn. The simplicity of walking with God. The utter stark generosity of handing over her life at such an early age and resting tranquil and secure that everything was safe - that all things work for the best for those who love God.



I pray that we can learn some of her traits, like the long-lost trait of obedience which is lacking nowadays; the long-lost utter generosity of commitment which is not in evidence nowadays, whereby a person gives his whole life and not for a week or a day at whim but forever, generously and irretractably; the joy of Holy Communion; of being with Our Lord; the glory of walking with Him day by day. I ask, personally, for these graces and gifts, I ask for a share in her spirit, I ask it for myself and I ask it for you.

Note: Homily at the 50th Anniversary Mass for Edel Quinn in St. Saviour's Dominican Church, Dublin at which Most Rev. Dr. Williams, Auxiliary to the Archbishop of Dublin was chief concelebrant. His Excellency Archbishop Emmanuel Gerada, Apostolic Nuncio, presided.