



Ancient Order of
HIBERNIANS
Irish • Catholic • American



GENERAL MEAGHER'S DISPATCHES

January-February 2025

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President: Dennis O'Reilly; **Chaplain:** Deacon Aaron Zaccagnino; **Vice President:** Jack McGovern; **Recording Secretary:** Bill Halpin; **Financial Secretary:** Jeff Everett; **Treasurer:** Dave McLaughlin; **Standing Committee:** Bill Hallahan; **Marshal:** Tim Lynch; **Sentinel:** Neil Hornung; **Webmaster:** Bob Fitzgerald; **Organizer:** Tim Lynch; **Newsletter Editor:** Bill Halpin (billhalpin@irishcultureva.org)

Pray to Mary Immaculate Patroness of the United States for the strength of mind and heart to defend our religious freedoms, for national moral guidance, and that our country will always be "one nation under God." This is critically important in this time of contrary moral agendas and the threats from patently evil elements.



President's Corner

Worthy Brothers:

March will be upon us tomorrow! And with it come many activities to commemorate Saint Patrick and the contributions of the Irish people and Irish culture to our beloved country and to the rest of the world. Since 1990 every U.S. President has proclaimed March to be Irish American Heritage Month. Governor Youngkin and the Fredericksburg City Council have proclaimed March 2025 to be Irish American Heritage Month. Thanks to Brother Jack McGovern for shepherding the proclamation package through the Fredericksburg Mayor's Office to get Mayor Devine's approval and signature on the Proclamation.

As we participate in in the various events this coming month, I ask each of you to be ambassadors and evangelists proclaiming the positive contributions the Irish have made through the centuries – and not the negative stereotypical behaviors some people associate with us. Perhaps the easiest way to make a powerful statement is to wear you Green Jackets to Mass each time you attend during the Month of March and be prepared to explain what the Ancient Order of Hibernians do and for what we stand.

We will have a chance to do this with the Irish American Heritage Month (IAHM) activities the Division has planned for the upcoming month. First will be the library presentations where we will explain the Good Friday Agreements, the United Kingdom's Legacy and Reconciliation Act, and the political environment in Northern Ireland. There will be a Division gathering at the Colonial Tavern on March 15th from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. Family members and friends are welcome to join us. Finally, some members of our Division have arranged to bring up the gift at Masses on Sundays during the Month of March. Perhaps you can do the same in your parishes.

In closing:

*May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of His hand.*

In Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity,

Dennis M. O'Reilly
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Our Division has two major fundraising activities each year. (Yes, I'm beating a dead horse)

1. The **Annual Shamrock Charity Golf Classic** will be played at Lake of the Woods on April 28, 2025. Success requires every brother's (*non-golfers as well*) commitment for some time and some effort.

- **Starting now!** Every brother has doctors, dentists, favorite restaurants, and commercial vendors. Each one of these can be a hole sponsor for our tournament or at least can donate something (dinner for two?) for our raffle. For hole sponsors, we'll place signage on the golf course that acknowledges the donation and advertises the sponsor. All supporters are noted on our website. Hole Sponsorship will cost about \$125.00
- On April 28th: Volunteers (about 3-4r hours' time) are needed to assist in placing/retrieving sponsors' signage at tee boxes, registering golfers, selling items to enhance the golf experience ("red tees", lengths of string, etc.), and placing "goody bags" on golf carts.

2. The **Annual Trip for Two to Ireland Raffle** also requires a commitment to sell *at least* 15 raffle tickets. We also need volunteers to sell tickets after Mass at one of our four parishes.

Ideally, we need at least two brothers per church per Mass. The parish liaison will arrange sales dates (two weekends per parish usually in June and August) and ask for your help.

3. In Summary: About 90% of all revenue from these two fundraisers is donated to our charities. The Division membership is 50 brothers. With minimal effort by every brother, we could sell 900 raffle tickets (\$7500) and 110 hole sponsors (\$13,200!). Keep in mind this money is distributed to our charities.



Sad News

John Clement Grey born in Wisconsin on October 11, 1937, died on February 4, 2025. Jack was a physicist, mathematician and Operations Research Analyst with degrees in physics and mathematics from University of Wisconsin, George Washington University and University of Oklahoma. More important he was a proud Irish Catholic gentleman and a most inspirational Hibernian brother.

He joined the General Meagher Division in 2015, received our Order's Major Degrees in 2016, and served as a division officer for several years. He enthusiastically enjoyed the brotherhood he found in the division. Through strength of character and dedication to Hibernian ideals, he was always present for duty, whether on cold December mornings at the Irish Brigade ceremony (even when forced to use his "St. Patrick blue" walker) or at critical division events.

Jack will be missed!





Some Good News!



Thanks to Jack McGovern's initiative and persistence, the Fredericksburg City Council proclaimed March 2025 to be Irish American Heritage Month. In all likelihood, this is a first!

City Mayor Kerry Devine (granddaughter of Irish immigrants) graciously welcomed Hibernians (r to l) General Thomas F. Meagher Division Vice President Jack McGovern, Mayor Devine, Brother Mike Keegan, and Past State President Bill Halpin. Mayor Devine read the proclamation before a crowd of about 400 city residents who displayed approval with a loud round of applause. The beautifully framed proclamation will be displayed at division meetings and at IAHM scheduled libraries.

Division Administration:

Quorum: This is the minimum number of brothers that must be present at meetings to make the proceedings of that meeting valid. Without a quorum the division cannot vote on critical issues, administer the Shamrock Degree, elect officers, pay bills, or approve the minutes of previous meetings. We need you to attend in person or, if needed, virtually using the Internet connection provided with the "Call to Meeting" alerts. Our meetings are to the point, generally lasting one hour and followed by a social time with snacks and beverages.





The Celt would forfeit his title to the respect of the civilized world, did he not fight with all his heart and all his soul and all his cunning against the empire which has despoiled him and murdered his kin, now with arms, now with artificial famine. There can be no peace between the two people until either Ireland is a desert or is free. There can be neither truce nor compromise.

St. Valentine

Valentine was a medical doctor who became a Catholic priest. He lived in Italy during the third century AD and served as a priest in Rome. He became famous for marrying couples who were in love but couldn't legally marry because Claudius II outlawed weddings. He perceived marriage to be a distraction for soldiers performing their tasks.

Valentine discovered performing weddings and was sent to jail. Valentine used his time in jail to continue to reach out to people with the love that he said Jesus Christ gave him for others. He befriended his jailer, Asterious, who asked Valentine to help his daughter, Julia, with her lessons. Julia was blind and needed someone to read material for her to learn it.

Claudius offered Valentine his freedom if he would renounce Christianity. He refused and was sentenced to death. Valentine wrote a last note to encourage Julia to stay close to Jesus and to thank her for being his friend. He signed the note: "From your Valentine." On February 14, 270, Valentine was beaten, stoned, and beheaded.

The most famous miracle attributed to Saint Valentine involved the farewell note to Julia. God miraculously cured Julia of her blindness so that she could personally read Valentine's note, rather than just have someone else read it to her.

ST BRIGID



St Brigid's Cross

February 1st is St Brigid's Day. This iconic woman is one of the most amazing role models in Irish history and yet amazingly many people have forgotten her story. While 'Iconic' and 'role model' are commonly used phrases and may have become trite, their power and meaning are true of this fascinating woman. She is one of three Patron Saints of Ireland, along with St Patrick and St Columcille.

Born in Dundalk in 450 AD, St Brigid was the founder of the first monastery in County Kildare (*Cill Dara*: "church of the oak"). Her mother, a Christian Pict slave, was baptized by Saint Patrick. Brigid's father was a pagan chieftain of Leinster and when she was ten years old, she was a servant for her father.

St Brigid is also known as Mary of the Gael (*Muire na nGael* (Our Lady of the Irish)). She called on God's help to convince her father to give her land in Kildare to build a convent. Her father said that he would only give her as much land as her cloak could cover. With God's help, the cloak grew to cover acres of land. With that Brigid and seven companions organized a communal, consecrated religious life for women. Also, she founded two monastic institutions, one for men, and the other for women. St Brigid died at the age of 75 in AD 525 and was buried in the church she created. Her remains were exhumed years later and brought to Downpatrick to be buried alongside Saints Patrick and Columcille; however, her skull was moved to Lisbon.

In the thirteenth century three Irish knights exhumed her body, took her skull to Portugal. But this was not the final resting place for her skull (or at least not for all of it) There is very little dignity in death for a saint, for their bones (or relics) are often chipped away and divvied out among the faithful.

Today, Saint Brigid's skull can be found in the Church of St. John the Baptist in Lumiar, Portugal. The tomb in which it is kept bears the inscription, "Here in these three tombs lie the three Irish knights who brought the head of St. Brigid, Virgin, a native of Ireland, whose relic is preserved in this chapel. In memory of which, the officials of the Altar of the same Saint caused this to be done in January AD 1283." In 1929 a small portion of St Brigid's skull was returned to Ireland and gifted to St Brigid's Church in Killester, a Dublin suburb. Archbishop Edward Byrne formally enshrined the relic at the church



UPCOMING EVENTS



March 1-31: Irish American Heritage Month: The Library schedule is:

- Central Rappahannock Library (Fxburg): March 4th, 5th, & 6th 2:00-5:00
- Snow Branch: March 11th, 12th, & 13th 2:00-5:00
- Manpower schedule is TBD -- Brothers O'Reilly, Hornung, Lynch, Fitzgerald and Halpin volunteered to support the effort. More volunteers are needed.

March 15th: Division Gathering at the Colonial Tavern and Kickoff of Trip for Two to Ireland Raffle 1-5 PM. This year we'll be selling 2,000 tickets

March 17th: St. Patrick Day!

April 17th: Funeral – 10:45 AM for J. J. Kelly, retired U.S. Army, Past Virginia State President, Past National Director, Past *Ard Ri*, Brian Boru Degree Team. Mass and burial at Arlington National Cemetery at 10:45AM. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Fisher House (<https://www.fisherhouse.org>), honoring John's commitment to veterans and families.

April 28th: The 12th Annual Shamrock Charity Golf Classic will be played at Lake of the Woods Golf Course. Hibernian volunteers are needed to ensure success!

Future

Division Gatherings/Luncheons: May 11th, July 20th, September 25th

FredNats Ball Games: April 27th, June 29th, and August 24th

September 20th: Halfway to St. Patrick Day and T4T drawing:



Our Division Prayers

Keep our brothers, family members and friends in your prayers.

- Deacon Aaron: Recovering from complications from thyroid cancer surgery.
- Jim O'Donnell: In PT recovering from surgery to repair a torn quadriceps tendon.
- Bob Fitzgerald – detached retina.
- Joe Daley - COPD and hemoptysis is improving.
- Lynne Mulhern, Brother Dan's wife, recovering from back surgery.
- Russell McLaughlin: Brother Dave's brother - frontotemporal dementia

- Hill Hornung: Brother Neil's brother - dementia.
- Margaret Casey: Brother Tim Lynch's aunt - dementia.
- Mary Lou and Keith Bowers: St Jude parishioners/friends of Deacon Aaron
- Alice Wilkowski associate of PDP Shawn Lenahan - stroke

Pray for the repose of the souls of deceased Brothers and family members.

- Repose of the soul of our Brother Jack Grey
- Repose of the soul of PSP and National Director J.J. Kelly
- Ruth Pettinger: Shawn Lenahan's aunt (Vietnam Vet) died on 19 March 2024
- Linda Mulhern Smith, Dan Mulhern's sister, died on 28 April 2024
- Jack Salvo, Jack McGovern's father-in-law, died in April 2024.

Send requests for inclusion in our newsletter to billhalpin@irishcultureva.org



Hibernian Attire

Every brother should have these articles of clothing.

Green Jacket: Brothers procure their own green jackets -- Kelly green is the color.

- One source: http://blazerdepot.com/pages/mens_blazer/augustagreenblazer.html. Visit the website; call the 800 number; tell them you are with AOH, and the \$5.00 small order fee can be waived. Kelly green is the color.
- Second source used by Major James Dooley Division: <https://www.uniformsinstock.com/collections/blazers/products/executive-apparel-winston-mens-kelly-green-blazer>
- Third option: <https://www.readygolf.com/trophy-club-green-blazer-jacket-by-readygolf/>

AOH Sash: Brothers procure their own sashes. The AOH tri-color sash represents the national colors of Ireland and should be worn over the right shoulder (green closest to collar) crossing to the left hip. Measure from right shoulder to left hip in inches; keep in mind the sash will normally be worn over a jacket, a raincoat/overcoat (and a growing waistline). Sashes are available from:

- D. & E. Morrissey (954-426-3514/ <http://www.hibernians-shamrock.com>). The National Hibernian usually has an ad for D & E Morrissey.
- Gettysburg Flag offers tri-color sashes and “special prices” for larger orders. <https://www.gettysburgflag.com/custom/irish-parade-sash>

Meagher Division shirts: Order from Minuteman Press [4122 Lafayette Blvd, Fredericksburg, VA 22408 \(540-898-7888\)](https://www.minutemanpress.com)

General AOH Logo Items: <https://aohapparel.com>

The AOH “uniform”

- *Semi-formal/formal occasions* are green sport coat, tri-color sash, white shirt, Irish theme tie, black trousers, and optional ball cap. These occasions include AOH Masses, funerals, dinners, parades, State and National conventions, and other public events.
- *For Informal events* i.e., Division outings (ball games, picnics, meetings, etc.) the division logo polo/sweatshirt and optional ball cap are appropriate.

This newsletter is an unofficial publication for members of the Gen. Thomas F. Meagher Division (44SP01) and others who may have an interest in division activities. It is published by Bill Halpin and unless shown otherwise, he is responsible for its content.