



Mayo Society of New York

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Founded 1879; incorporated 1891 as Mayo Men's Benefit, Patriot and Social Association of the City of New York; later as Mayo Men's P & B Association and in 1985, gender neutral as the Mayo Society, Inc. of the City of New York.

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Newsletter

December 2021

Regular Meeting Tuesday, December 14, 2021

**Where: Donovan's Bar & Restaurant
5724 Roosevelt Ave**

Woodside, NY 11377

Time: 7:30 P.M. Sharp

Regular meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month. There are no meetings July & August.

Our President's Note

Dear Members and Friends,

I hope you enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving with your family and friends.

We had a lovely communion breakfast on November 14th in Connolly's Corner. It was great to see new members attending, others connecting after a long 18 months while remembering all of those that have passed. Fr. Cunningham presided over the service and led us in prayers and blessings. My sincere thanks to Rita Lydon Lenz & Mary Coyne Byrne for arranging the event and making it another memorable experience for us all.

Congratulations to **Mike McMahon & Kieran McAndrew** who were elected at the November meeting as your next **President & Vice-President** respectively. Additionally, I welcome our newly elected board and trustees and wish everyone much success in their new roles and future endeavors.

Our next meeting the Christmas party will be held in **Donovan's**, (not in St Sebastian's) on December 14th at 7:30 pm. I hope you will all join us as this is our last meeting for 2021. The meeting is always an opportunity to introduce new members to our great Society so bring along your family and friends for some "Craic and Ceoil".

As it's close to the end of the year, please ensure your dues are up to date, it's only \$10 a year for existing members. New members are always welcome.

Get your dancing shoes out.....we're back !!!!

Our annual dinner dance is back on the calendar for March 12th, 2022. Our wonderful honorees: **Rita Lydon Lenz and William (Bill) Lynn** will be the Mayo Woman and Mayo Man of the Year. Both have been very gracious and patient so looking forward to celebrating our 2020 honorees in 2022. Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic postponed our dinner dance in 2020 or 2021.

With the holidays in motion, it is great to have the spirit of Christmas back and everyone able to share this special time of the year with family and friends. Please continue to be mindful of the CDC guidelines, as we celebrate together.

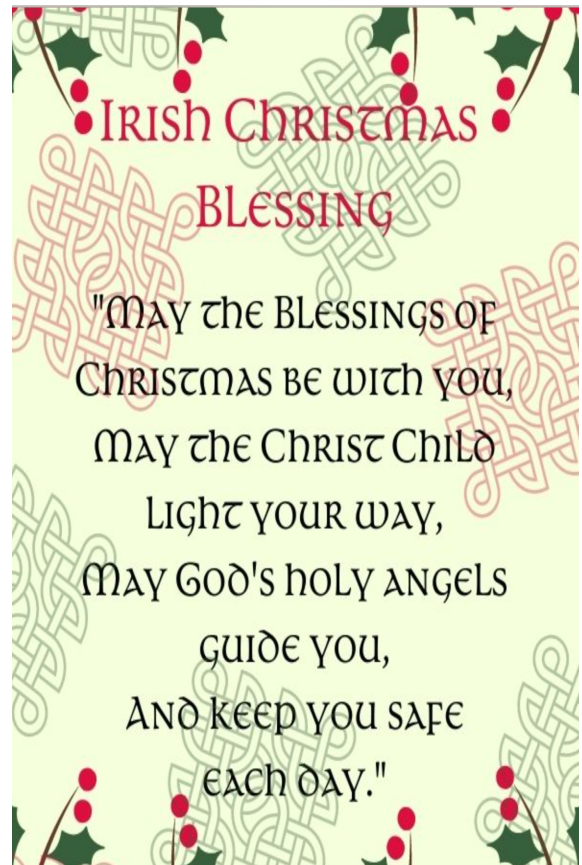
Please keep our dearly departed and sick members in our thoughts, prayers, and masses.

I wish you all a Blessed Christmas, and a Happy & Healthy New Year.

Slàn Agus Beannacht go Fhóill

Merry Christmas.

Noreen Lydon O'Donoghue



The Choctaw Native American Tribe's Contribution to Ireland during The Great Hunger

On 23 March 1847, the height of the Great Hunger in Ireland, a contribution to relieve the suffering of the starving people came from a very unlikely source. The Choctaw Native American tribe raised a sum of \$170. The amount may seem small, but it would be thousands of dollars in today's money. It was certainly a fortune to the Choctaw, for they were a poor people.

Only a few years before, in 1831, the Choctaw had been driven from their homes in Mississippi to the Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) five hundred miles away. Of 15,000, some 2,500 perished on the way of hunger, disease, exposure, and exhaustion. In the next few years, the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Muscogee tribes also walked what was called the "Trail of Tears". The Cherokee may have lost about a third of their tribe there.

When they heard about the people in Ireland starving and being driven from their homes, I think they understood that like nobody else could.

Their incredible generosity and care for faraway strangers is gratefully remembered in Ireland. In 1990, members of the Choctaw tribe were invited to participate in the "Famine Walk Memorial" at Doolough, Co. Mayo to remember the 600 starving people who walked 12 miles from Louisburg to petition for relief. They were turned away and it is said that nearly 400 perished. The people in Middleton, Co. Cork financed a monument there unveiled in 2015 called "Kindred Spirits" with Eagle feathers (a bird sacred to the Choctaw, it is believed they carry prayers to Heaven) in the shape of an empty bowl.

On a recent visit to the US, Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar addressed the members of the Choctaw nation in Durant, Oklahoma and announced a scholarship for a Choctaw student in Ireland beginning in Autumn of 2019.

In November of 2020 over €2.5 million was donated by grateful Irish citizens to the Navajo and Hopi tribes to help them with their struggle against the COVID-19 virus. This was inspired by the amazing generosity of the Choctaw tribe, strengthened the bond of friendship between our peoples and was greatly appreciated.

Kevin Rooney



VENERABLE FATHER FÉLIX VARELA: APOSTLE OF THE (IRISH) IMMIGRANTS

Father Félix Varela y Morales was born in Havana, Cuba on 20 November 1788 and raised in St. Augustine, Florida; both of which were under Spanish control. He became a priest at the age of 23. In 1821, he was chosen to represent Cuba in the Spanish Parliament in Madrid. He joined a petition advocating independence from Spain and the abolition of slavery in Cuba. In 1823, he was sentenced to death after the restoration of King Ferdinand VII (The Felon King). He fled to New York.

In New York, Fr. Varela published several newspapers and articles in Spanish and English concerning human rights and religious tolerance. In 1827, he founded a church at 29 Mott Street known as the Church of the Transfiguration in the neglected Five Points neighborhood crowded with Irish immigrants.

It became known as the Church of the Immigrant. The church later served Italian immigrants and presently the Chinese. In 1832, he opened a school with the church parish. In 1837, he was appointed Vicar General of the Diocese of New York. He cared especially for the poor Irish immigrant community in New York and specifically in his parish flooding in dramatically during the Great Hunger. Fr. Varela learned to speak the Irish language to better communicate with them. He defended them from religious and nativist prejudice.

In 1848, his health deteriorated from his tireless years of work and from asthma and he returned to St. Augustine, Florida where he died on 27 February 1853. His body was later returned to Havana, Cuba where he is buried and where he is well remembered. Cuban National hero José Martí proclaimed his admiration for Father Varela, also calling him a saint. He should be better remembered in New York and should be known in Ireland in my opinion. In 2012, the Vatican declared him "Venerable." That is a step on the way to beatification.

Kevin Rooney

