

Brother Thomas Baptist Cahill

1781-1858

1781	Born Callan	
1798	Rebellion	
1810	Rice to Bray	School system
1815	Member of Thurles Monkeny.	
1815	February Mount Sion	Novitiate
1816	Return to Thurles	Chapel Lane
1817	TBC Waterford	Superiors' meeting re brief
1818	Site from Earl of Llanduff	Pudding Lane
1821	Thurles meeting	Re brief
1822	2 June	Vows, Waterford.
1825	In Limerick	Replaced J A Grace, Preston
1831	Chapter	JBC NOT a member.
1832	Cholera, in Thurles	TBC elsewhere
1835	Carrick-on-Suir	
1837	Cork	
1838	Chapter	As an 'Ancient Brother'
1841	Cahill/Ellis, separating!	TBC NOT involved
1858	Death	Thurles

When did JBC return from Cork to Thurles?

Brother Thomas Baptist Cahill

1781-1858

Frank Keane

Thomas Cahill was born in Callan, County Kilkenny, about the year 1781. Descendants of the Cahills still reside in the Callan area, and are well aware of their illustrious ancestor. His great grandnephew, also named Thomas Baptist Cahill, informs us that he owned houses and land in Callan. This land, known locally as the *Monks' Fields*, was on the road leading to Goat's Bridge. Besides owning property Thomas was a very successful bootmaker, employing several men at his premises in Green Street. Callan at the time boasted of two flourishing tanneries. One of these was owned by a Mr Dunne, from Westcourt, a cousin of the Rice's. It is likely Cahill purchased leather from Dunne.

However, we know that Thomas' life was threatened in 1798. Then a youth of seventeen years he was involved, or alleged to have been involved, in the rebellion, and for this was condemned to be flogged. He was tied to the infamous 'Triangle' but released due to the intervention of an influential local Protestant gentleman. As an act of thanksgiving he determined to devote the rest of his life helping others. He left Callan and went to live in Thurles.

We read in the document DECEASED BROTHERS [1816-1885]

He was a native of Callan. During the rebellion of 1798 he was hung (sic) at 'The Cross of Callan' to be flogged but was fortunately 'let off with a caution' to be more loyal to the English Government.

Later commentators state that Thomas was actually flogged, and under the care of a benefactor, recovered from his ordeal. This statement does not tally with the actual evidence to hand.

Under the rather [odious](#) sounding heading, 'MONKERIES' the author of the Thurles annals, Brother Thomas James Nugent [1844-1920], writing in 1888, recounts;

It appears that at the close of the last, and at the beginning of the present century, owing, I dare say, to the penal enactments in force against Catholics, especially in the matter of Education, in many places in the south of Ireland, some good and pious Catholic laymen banded themselves together for the purpose of counteracting the evil designs of the civil Government to keep the Catholics of Ireland in a state of ignorance. The chief object of the groups of laymen was to sanctify themselves, to give good example, to encourage others especially the young, and to teach and keep alive in the latter the principles and practices of the Catholic Religion. These little circles of pious men frequently assembled for prayer and pious exercises, and on that account were called by the people 'Monkeries.'

He gives further details on the 'THE TWO CAHILLS'

The two founders of the Thurles monastery, viz. Thomas Cahill and William Cahill (no relation) belonged to that class. Thomas Cahill (afterwards Brother Baptist) was a native of Callan, Co. Kilkenny, and a brogue maker by trade – at that time a very good and lucrative business. I may mention that before leaving Callan he was hanged by the wrists on the large market Cross in Callan to be flogged by the yeomanry 1798, but through the intercession of a local Protestant gentleman, he was let off with a caution,

warning him to be more loyal to his Majesty the King in the future. Afterwards coming to Thurles he settled down there and made the acquaintance of William Cahill, of Quarry Street, afterwards Brother Joseph Cahill.

In Thurles, together with William Cahill and James Healy, they set up a school for poor boys. This was likely in Chapel Lane, close to the Cathedral. At some stage they acquired a residence in Pike [otherwise Quarry] Road.

We know this also from the testimony of his nephew Thomas Cahill of Callan [given in 1949]. He tells this story:

Dr. Bray of Cashel and the Bishop [Power] of Waterford met one day. They began to talk about education. Says the Bishop of Waterford – “I have an excellent man looking after the poor boys of Waterford, and he comes from Callan.” “Indeed.” says Dr. Bray, “I’ll wager I have a better man doing the same work, and he comes from Callan too!”

They were speaking about Edmund Rice and Thomas Cahill. This conversation took place prior to 1810 for in that year Edmund Rice sent a letter with an enclosure detailing his system of education as in use in Mount Sion.

In his letter Brother Rice remarks ‘Yr. Grace I hope will be able to select something out of them to save the school in Thurles.’ While writing to the Archbishop seems reasonable, why was the ‘Enclosure’ containing the school regulations not sent directly to the Monks? It would seem that the school was struggling at the time, as the purpose of the letter was ‘to save the school.’ Did this apply to the physical structure, or to the actual academic arrangements? Would it seem that the Monks were not particularly successful as teachers?

In any event five years later, James Ryan and James Healy, having separated from the group, the Cahills decided to become part of the Presentation society.

James Healy left the group, prior to 1815, and entered the seminary and was ordained priest. Ever after he remained a staunch supporter of the Brothers and their schools.

Brother Nugent recorded he following in the Thurles House annals:

The two Cahills, William of Thurles and Thomas of Callan were the founders of the Christian Brothers in Thurles in 1815. Mr William and Mr Thomas Cahill went to Mount Sion, Waterford, to be trained in the life of a monk. They both decided to join the Edmund Rice Society.

They received the habit and completed their novitiate at Mount Sion. Then, having returned to Thurles, the elder William was 43 years old and Thomas of Callan ten years younger e.g. 36 years.

They determined to do for the youth of Thurles what was being done by Edmund Rice for the youth of Waterford. Accordingly, they took a house and opened a school in what was then called Chapel Lane where the Presentation Convent and schools now stand. The two Cahills continued to teach school and were soon joined by some young men, one of the earliest being James Healy. The latter became a priest and at a later time Parish Priest of Newport, County Tipperary.

The Brothers Cahill seeing their community increasing and the house and school accommodation very defective determined to take a plot of land at the back of the gaol and built thereon suitable for a noviceship for the district all around, as also schools. At this time Doctor Everard was made co-adjutor Bishop to Doctor Bray.

EDMUND RICE FAMILIAR WITH THURLES

Edmund Rice became well-known in the diocese of Cashel & Emly through his involvement in the administration of charities. Those principally involved were the Mary Power Charity and the Archbishop James Butler Bequest. James Butler 11 was Archbishop of Cashel 1774 to 1791. He is the acknowledged author of Butler's Catechism. The Power Charity brought Edmund Rice to Thurles at least five times during 1816-1818. The Butler Bequest proved a much longer saga. These transactions made him a familiar figure with the Archbishop and priests of the archdiocese.

As the Butler Bequest involved investments for education Edmund became deeply involved.

Briefly James Butler stipulated that £2,250 from the disposal of his Estate at Ballyragget, County Kilkenny, should be devoted to the education poor children. Unfortunately, neither his Executor, Bishop William Egan of Waterford & Lismore [who died in 1795], nor the latter's Executor, Father Edmund Cormack of Cashel, secured the revenue.

Thomas Bray, as Archbishop of Cashel & Emly [1792-1820], was appointed executor. In October 1817 he assigned the interests in the Bequest over to Fathers James Healy and Robert Laffan, and to Edmund Rice. The document was signed by Edmund Rice and witnessed by William Cahill. In November Thomas **Baptist Cahill** assigned house and school in Chapel Lane to Frs Laffan and Healy, and Edmund Rice, for £500 @ 6% until the principal was recovered. This Deed was sworn in 1818.

We have noted [above](#) that Bray was very interested in Edmund's system of education; William Cahill was one of the Thurles Monks, a Presentation Brother since 1816; James Healy, before ordination, was yet another 'Monk'. Laffan would later inherit the Mitre of Cashel & Emly, 1823-1833.

The Butler Bequest also involved both the Ursuline and Presentation Convents. Briefly the Ursuline Sisters opened a school in Thurles in 1787. Surviving the usual trials and tribulations of pioneers they eventually built a convent in 1818, financed by the Coadjutor Bishop Patrick Everard, with £2,500. The Presentation Sisters came in 1817, lived in a small house in the Main Street, and taught poor girls in the Ursuline school, who agreed to 'defray all the expenses of the Presentation School'. The Presentation Convent, financed by Archbishop Robert Laffan with £2,000, was opened in 1826.

LEASE (Thurles House Annals)

The Cahills possessed considerable property of their own and relying on the good will of the Archbishop, priests and people to second their efforts applied to the Earl of Llandaff who granted to Thomas Cahill a lease for ever of the plot of ground containing three roods plantation measure at the annual rental of £5 5s. (five guineas) Irish currency on consideration that a large, well-executed, building comprising Monastery and schools should be built by lessee within two years, giving the right of a

free and open passage to Pudding Lane with egress and ingress. The Lease is dated 16th April 1818 and registered B 851, P 204, No. 569,204.

The Brothers ‘had to dwell in a most inconvenient residence in Pike Road until a new Monastery should be built’ [Pres Annals] Living in “a most inconvenient abode” (Pres Annals,) which was ‘very defective’ (Thurles House Annals) required action. In 1820 “When the (new) Monastery was ready the Brs left the Quarry (Pike) residence and the school near the palace (in Chapel Lane) and went to live and to teach in the present Monastery” (Br J S Hyland 1892). It was due to the influence of Bishop Patrick Everard that they “built a large and commodious house suitable for a novitiate for the district all round” (THA). Nugent in his annals informs us:

The Brothers Cahill seeing their community increasing, and the House and school accommodation very defective determined to take a plot of land at the back of the Gaol and built thereon a large and commodious House suitable for a Noviceship for the district all around, as also schools.

It may be as well here to quote in full from the Annals of the Presentation Convent, Thurles. Besides given some historical data, we also get excellent character sketches of the original Monks.

By the advice of Superiors and others interested in the establishment, they [Presentation Sisters] treated with a [few religious men](#) for this convent and School House in Chapel Lane, who consented to give them for £1,000 to which the nuns agreed. On the part of the religious men it was considered a [great act of generosity](#) as they had to dwell in [a most inconvenient abode](#) on Pike Road until a new monastery should be built.

These pious men [inspired to lead a life of celibacy](#) lived by their [manual labour](#) and employed much of their time in [instructing the male children](#) of the town gratis.

They conformed to a rule compiled by the Most Rev. Dr Bray in giving up their little establishment. On giving up their establishment they prepared to build the Convent & Schools where they at present stand on a more extensive plan which they affected by dint of [attention and active labour](#). After a short time they joined a society termed [Brothers of the Christian Doctrine](#) recently established in Ireland.

This is truly a splendid accolade respecting William Cahill, Thomas Cahill, James Ryan and James Healy. The Presentation chronicler gives an inspiring description of the four Monks. These ‘few religious men’, capable of ‘a great act of generosity,’ were ‘inspired to lead a life of celibacy’, and while maintaining themselves through ‘manual labour’ gave their time to ‘instructing the male children.’ Despite the fact they lived in ‘a most inconvenient abode’, they soon had their own Convent & School thanks to their ‘attention and active labour.’ This is possibly one of the most sincere and accurate descriptions of the early Brothers, expressed simply and without any verbal ornamentation.

While the focus of the Cahill Brothers was on their new house and school, events elsewhere were occupying the Brothers’ attention. Through the influence of Bishop Daniel Murray of Dublin the Brothers saw the advantages of adopting a rule of life similar to that of the De La Salle Brothers. A meeting of Superiors of all the houses (with a representative from Cork) was held in Waterford and agreed to a course of action, signed on 25 August 1817. Baptist represented the Thurles Community.

Following this meeting, and after extensive consultation, an application was made to Rome for approval of a new Institute. Pope Pius VII issued the Brief of Approval on 5 September 1820. The Brothers decided to accept the brief ‘in due form’ in Waterford in January 1822. A preliminary meeting was scheduled to be held in Dublin in August 1821. At the last moment the venue for this meeting was shifted to Thurles.

En passant it is as well to remark that the statements of later commentators suggesting that meetings were also held in Thurles in 1818 and 1819, cannot be sustained.

The 1821 assembly was called 'to adopt measures for receiving it [the Papal Brief] in due form' and to discuss the view of three professed Brothers 'that this brief gave too much authority to the Superior General.' In brief nineteen Brothers of a possible twenty-four professed Brothers assembled in Thurles. It is outside the scope of this necrology to give a full account of who were present in Thurles, who stayed away, and what was procedures were followed. Austin Dunphy, who is usually accurate wrote the three Brothers absented themselves. Actually, five did not attend, the two Leonards, O'Connor and Riordan (Cork), and Mulcahy (Cappoquin). On 25 August, of the nineteen Brothers present seventeen signed the first resolution; nineteen signed the other. For our purposes both Cahills signed both resolutions.

The next item on the agenda was the retreat, acceptance of the Brief and renewal of vows according to the new rule. This occurred in January 1822, in Waterford. Of the nineteen who assembled in Thurles, four did not go to Waterford. These were P F Hanrahan, Dublin; T F Ready, Carrick-on-Suir, and the two Cahills. The first two withdrew from the Brothers; the Cahills persevered. No reason or explanation of their delayed action has been suggested.

However, both travelled to Waterford and made profession of vows as Religious Brothers in June 1822. Another member of the group, Martin Sweeney, made profession on 13 July 1823. He was immediately transferred to Hanover Street, East, Dublin. James Ryan never made vows.

Returning to Thurles the Cahills found their new school filled to capacity, the convents and schools of the Ursuline and Presentation Sisters nearing completion, and a new Archbishop in the See of Saint Ailbe, their old friend Robert Laffan [1823-1833], will be appointed. A complete religious renewal was about to affect Thurles and environs.

Baptist resumed the post of director of the monastery and devoted his energies to the welfare of the children in the school.

Nugent informs us that in **1827**:

During this period Brother Baptist (Tom) Cahill was Director of the house and one of the Novices here at the time was Brother Patrick Welsh, who afterwards was for so many years Director of the Limerick House. The usual summer vacation consisted in painting, settling up and renovating the schools and House etc. An extraordinary vacation day consisted in being allowed to walk to Killough Hill with a bit of bread in their pockets.

Welsh's biographer Brother J D Burke, adds further details:

During one of the summer **vacations** which he spent in Thurles he was well-nigh losing his life. The house and schools are three storeys high, and the shoots and windows required a doing up; and the Director asked him to amuse himself for a part of the vacation in cleaning and painting them, a work he cheerfully undertook. A ladder about forty-foot-long was required, and this was placed in position. One day the ladder slipped while Br Patrick was on it, and only that he caught the side of one of the windows as the ladder was falling, and held fast until relief came, he would certainly have been killed or severely injured.

Walking to Killough Hill, sustained by 'a bit of bread in their pockets', and cleaning windows and shoots, seems a creative, even amusing, way for Brothers to enjoy the relaxation associated with a Summer vacation.

Baptist was transferred from Thurles to Limerick in 1826, replacing Brother John Austin Grace, who was appointed to Preston. Limerick was then entering a new phase of its history with the move to Sexton Street and the building of a new monastery and schools. The then Director of Limerick, Brother James Francis Thornton, was disappointed when the Brothers were evicted from their school at the Assembly Rooms, Charlotte Quay, to temporary, inconvenient accommodation at Park, the diocesan college; the community also moved temporarily to Park from Clare Street. However, in contrast, he was happy to see the Brothers move to the new Monastery in 1827 and the new schools in 1829. Baptist must have been happy to be part of a new area in Limerick, the beginning of the Sexton Street establishment, which has figured so prominently in the history of the institute, as in the history of Limerick, both city and county.

On 1 October 1829 Baptist is registered as a member of the Carrick-on-Suir community as recorded in the NOTICE OF REGISTRY, required of all religious following Catholic Emancipation. The others in the community were Brothers John Patrick Corbett and Michael Baptist Green. While dates of transfer have not been accurately recorded, Baptist was in Carrick-on-Suir from 1829 to 1835.

Father James Healy requested the Baptist be allowed visit Newport and assist him during Holy Week. The Founder was most obliging and supportive of this move. In a letter to Brother Patrick Corbett, 27 March 1830, he wrote:

I had a letter from Fr Healy a day or two ago requesting permission for Br Baptist Cahill to be sent to Newport [Co. Tipperary] to assist him in Holy Week Ceremonies. I wrote him yesterday that his request would be attended to and requested he may write to say what day he would be expecting him. You'll please to mention this to Br. Baptist, and tell him I wish he may return about the middle of Easter Week at farthest.

While in Carrick-on-Suir Baptist was unwell for a while. In a letter from Brother Rice to Brother Patrick Corbett, dated 9 February 1833, we read:

I am sorry to hear of Br. Baptist Cahill's stomach is not getting well; although it is sickening and annoying yet it is a complaint which very seldom does more injury, and I hope in God that he will throw it off, for he has been always hardy and strong.

Two very important events in the Institute's history were the Assembly of 1829 and the Chapter of 1831/32. Baptist did not figure in any way in any of them. However, his former companion, Brother William Joseph Cahill, was elected to both as Director of Thurles.

Baptist was certainly a member of the Carrick community in January 1835, as is evident from a letter from Brother Patrick Ellis, since 1832 Director of Thurles, to Patrick Corbett, Director in Carrick.

Thurles, January 13th, 1835.

My Very Dear Br. Patrick,

As yet there are *but* two of us here in this big House—Br. Joseph Cahill and myself. Yesterday, the 12th, when we opened school after vacation, 250 boys made their appearance; and to-day we had 277 in attendance, and this in a room that, at most, can accommodate only 200. What a pity I had to turn away 62 of them for want of room? We are both in good health, and we hope such is the case with you, [Br. Baptist Cahill](#), and Br. Jerome Foley. Uniting with Br. Joseph in love to them and you.

I remain, my very dear Br. Patrick,
Your affectionate Brother,
P. ELLIS.

Later in the year he was transferred to Cork as he is listed as a member of the North Monastery community in 1835. The community consisted of Brother Baptist Leonard, Brother Francis Manifold, Brother Joseph Keane, Brother Austin Coleman, [Brother Baptist Cahill](#), Brother Louis Doyle, and Brother John Wiseman. What an extraordinary group of distinguished luminaries to live in the same house and maintain in such high esteem the two schools at the North Monastery and Sullivan's Quay.

Brother Michael Paul Reardon was the Director in Cork at that date, 1835. The other members of the Community were—. Brother John taught the head school, Our Lady's Mount, and Brother Louis Doyle the principal school, Sullivan's Quay. Many friends rejoiced in the good fortune of the Brothers, but none more than Mrs. Aikenhead, foundress of the Irish Sisters of Charity.

In a letter, written 1835, to the Rectress, in Cork, she says—"Your news, of good Dr. Barry's Will, in favour of the Christian Schools, raised my heart to love our Good God, and to praise His holy Name. My faith, my hope, my charity, have been increased, and I assure you that this circumstance, added to that, of Mr. Rice, having also been left a sum of seven or eight thousand pounds, Mr. Bryan Bolger's bequest, has been a source of very great consolation to me."

It is as well to remark here that the seven or eight thousand pounds from Brian Bolger, while initially bringing consolation to Edmund Rice, would eventually cause him his greatest headache, leading to the mortgage of the North Richmond Street house.

Baptist went about his schoolwork quietly in the Mon. He must have kept very quiet, as he is rarely referred to in any contemporary document. Like the two previous chapter he was not elected to the 1836 Chapter, which *inter alia* elected an Assistant in place of Edward Austin Dunphy and decided to disaffiliate the Brothers' schools from the National Board of Education.

Baptist was elected as an Ancient Brother, of the Cork Community, to the General Chapter of 1838, at which Michael Paul Riordan was elected Superior General. The major contentious issue addressed at the chapter was that allowing pay schools. Being a member of the Cork Community, it is likely he supported the election of Brother Riordan, and disapproved of pay schools.

Dominic Burke informs us that in

1839 the Government of the Institute and the Novitiate were transferred to Cork, owing to financial difficulties connected with Richmond Street, and hence Gerald [Griffin] and other Novices were sent to that House. Br. Jerome O'Connor was then the Director of Cork, and Brs. John Wiseman, Louis Doyle, Ignatius Kelly, Baptist Cahill, and Joseph Keane were members of the Community. The following Brothers were Gerald's fellow Novices at that time: Austin Kerin, Vincent Glynn, John Reale, and Patrick Hughes.

Nugent informs us

Br Patrick Ellis was Director from 1834 to 1841. I was given to understand that he and Br [Baptist](#) did not pull well together. Br Patrick wanted to turn the top storey of the Monastery into schools and even went so far as to procure an iron stairway from gable end. Br [Baptist](#) was totally opposed to this scheme.

If Nugent is correct Baptist must have returned to Thurles prior to 1841. How comfortable did Patrick Ellis feel in Baptist's company? Firstly, the opposition to the 'top storey' development made him change his plans. In the same paragraph we read

Br Patrick even went so far as to offer to give the whole place over to Dr Slattery who by the bye was no great friend of the Brothers. This he could not do legally. Finally, Br Patrick was sent to Waterford.

Again, Ellis was thwarted by 'Br. Baptist Cahill, in whom the legal title to the premises was vested, refused to be a party to this project, or to sign the Memorial for it.'

Baptist was not elected to the 1841 Chapter. While this chapter dealt with the recurring variety of disputatious issues, refusing admittance to the Founder, pay schools, the mortgage case, the National Board, and the Founder's debts, the Thurles House took centre stage, causing the chapter to suspend operations, while the matter was resolved.

Dominic Burke gives one version of the story:

Another source of trouble arose at this time. The two Brothers residing in the Thurles House, aware of the misunderstanding existing between the Government of the Institute and the Founder's Executors, became foolishly anxious to secure their own House, over which one of them then presided as Director, and imprudently framed a Memorial to the Holy See praying a few special privileges to that distinct House, to secure it, in fact, against the Executors, and got the Archbishop of Cashel, Dr. Slattery, to forward their document to Rome. The effect of this, if granted, would go far to sever that House from the Body. Br. **Baptist Cahill**, in whom the legal title to the premises was vested, **refused** to be a party to this project, or to sign the Memorial for it. He subsequently assigned the property to the Superior General to put it out of the power of anyone to cut it off from the Institute.

Put simply, due to the Founder's debts, there was a possibility that the assets of the Congregation would be sequestered by the Government. The 'two Brothers residing in Thurles', Patrick Ellis and William Joseph Cahill, believing that their house was in danger, decided to ask Rome 'to sever it from the Body.' Their appeal was made by Archbishop Michael Slattery [1833-1857]. Here it may be as well to note two conflicting accounts of Slattery's attitude to the Brothers. In the necrology of Brother William Joseph Cahill we are informed that Doctor Slattery personally attended to Joseph in his dying days, and 'by his kindly manner and conversation consoled the dying Brother, telling him that having taught the Catechism to the children for over eight and forty years he need have no fear of meeting his dear Lord, whose doctrines he had so zealously made known to the young.' These are certainly words of approval. However, Nugent, writing in the annals fifty years later informs us that Slattery 'by the bye was no great friend of the Brothers.' This is clear from his letter to Archbishop Cullen in which he says, 'for many Bishops are averse to its establishment in their Dioceses without having some control over it.'

Br Patrick Ellis was Director from 1834 to 1841. I was given to understand that he and Br **Baptist** did not pull well together. Br Patrick wanted to turn the top storey of the Monastery into schools and even went so far as to procure an iron stairway from gable end. Br **Baptist** was totally opposed to this scheme. Br Patrick even went so far as to offer to give the whole place over to Dr Slattery who by the bye was no great friend of the Brothers. This he could not do legally.

A full account of this episode is in Normoyle's, "*A Tree is Planted*," chapters 34 and 35. Also nine letters dealing with this matter can be read in Normoyle's 'The Roman Correspondence.'

In 1841 divisions were appearing among the Brothers. It was suggested that the form of government would revert to diocesan status. Brother William Joseph Cahill in Thurles favoured the move; Patrick Ellis, initially, did not approve. However, he changed his mind and with Joseph Cahill made an appeal to Rome, dated 22 June 1841, seeking independence from the main body of Brothers. The matter was finally concluded by a delegation of the 1841 Chapter.

Reading the account of the ‘pursuit’ of Archbishop Slattery on Sunday, 18 July, by the delegation sounds amusing today. When Brothers Riordan Murphy and Ellis reached Thurles, they discovered that the Archbishop was absent on visitation. They hired a car, and followed a trail to Tipperary, then Hospital and finally Herbertstown, County Limerick, when they met Doctor Slattery. His Grace was informed of the Chapter’s decision, and the withdrawal of the request of Ellis and Cahill. There the matter was settled. Thurles remains an integral part of the Institute of Christian Brothers. While very interested in proceedings, Baptist remained aloof.

In Nugent’s words, the upshot of these manoeuvres was, ‘Finally Br Patrick was sent to Waterford.’ His place as Director was taken by Brother Edward Francis Doyle.’

One wonders what thoughts passed through Baptist’s mind. The Director was ‘removed’, and his place taken by a hypochondriac. He was saddened by the death on 24 June 1843 of his pioneering colleague Brother William Joseph Cahill. However, he kept on teaching school. His influence in the community remained strong. Francis Doyle saw that school accommodation was not sufficient. However, there was little he could do. We read in the annals:

Seeing that the school accommodation was not at all sufficient, and that Br Baptist offered his most strenuous opposition to turning the top storey into a school, saw no way of solving the difficulty than to arrange to fit up a large store room for school purposes for junior pupils. This he accomplished in the early part of 1843. This room is still used being the infant school of the present day 1892.

Baptist was not totally opposed to cooperation. The annals tell us:

A short time before this [1848] Brother Baptist (Tom) Cahill, being now aged and infirm assigned his right title and interest in the lease and premises, House and schools to Michael Paul Riordan (who succeeded Br Ignatius Rice as Superior General), Patrick Joseph Murphy and Thomas Joseph Hearne of Mount Sion Waterford in trust for the purposes of the Society of the Christian Schools, and for the instruction and education of the children of the poor, and to the survivors or survivor of them.

A frisson of excitement ran through the community in 1848 when Brother Francis Larkin joined the community. While talented and respected in all things, he had tales to tell of his experiences in Sydney, Australia in 1843. In 1850 he became Director of Thurles. As such much credit is given to him for the excellent vocations to the priesthood and our congregation cultivated in Thurles at that time. Four men who shed luster on the Congregation came from the Thurles school. These were Brothers John Alphonsus Nolan [1831-1915], Edmund Austin Maher [1831-1920], Patrick Ambrose Treacy [1834-1912] and James Philip Ryan [1836-1929]. The inspiration of Francis Larkin encouraged Ambrose Treacy to embark to Australia. By some coincidence Ambrose, as Provincial, welcomed Francis back to Australia years later.

Francis did not seem to have experienced opposition from Baptist. If he did, he simply ignored it. He succeeded in building a major extension to the school and house. In order to pay forth his building he canvassed subscriptions from the clergy, beginning with the Archbishop. The clergy and benefactors contributed generously. These included people in Tipperary, Dublin, and Christian Brothers establishments both in Ireland and England.

The high regard in which the Brothers’ school in Thurles was held resulted in the loss of Francis to accept the invitation of Bishop Kelly of Derry to open a school there in 1854. He was succeeded by Brother Myles Ignatius Kelly, whose entry to the Brothers, like that of Baptist, predated the Brief of Pius VII. He immediately acquired additional land for the school, erecting enclosing walls and entrance gates.

Details of Baptist's final years are scarce. We read in the annals:

On the 14th of March 1858 in the 77th year of his age Br Baptist (Tom) Cahill died a very holy and edifying death. He was interred at 5.30 p.m. in the cemetery at the end of the garden. The Archbishop Most Rev Dr Leahy and all the priests of the town assisted at the funeral.

The name of Brother Thomas Baptist Cahill is invariably associated with Thurles. As we have seen some of his very active years were usefully employed in Limerick, Carrick-on-Suir and Cork. He witnessed the development of the Monks, through the Presentation era, to becoming in time Christian Brothers. The move from Chapel Lane to Pudding Lane consolidated the Brothers' position in Thurles. Successive Directors met with opposition and cooperation from him. No personal tribute has survived. One might wonder why William Joseph Cahill was included in the necrology, and Baptist ignored.

Let us hold the name of Thomas Baptist Cahill in esteem. With Edmund Ignatius Rice, John Ignatius Mulcahy, Edward Austin Dunphy, Jerome Jeremiah O'Connor, Thomas John-Baptist Cahill, John Joseph Keane the pioneering superiors of the Religious Brothers he merits an honored place in the wonderful Pantheon of heroes.