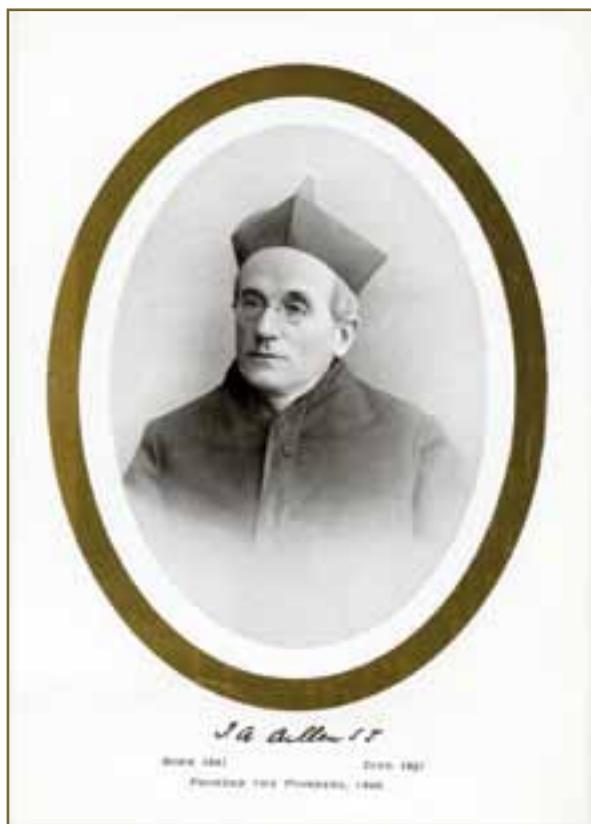


PIONEERS: TO BEGIN WITH WOMEN



Fr James A. Cullen, Founder

In the summer of 1898, Fr Cullen made his way to St Patrick's Purgatory, Lough Derg in County Donegal. There, he prayed for the guidance of Ireland's patron saint about a project that had been germinating in his mind and heart over a number of years. We present here a written account of his own thought-process in the quarter-of-a-century preceding his inspired decision to found the Pioneer Association. He was speaking to a large audience in the City Hall, Cork a hundred years ago in 1911.

And so I was led to venture on a new experiment. On Rosary Sunday, 1874 after the celebration of Mass in the little country chapel of Glynn, in the County Wexford, where I was then engaged on a Mission, it struck me that without Fr Mathew's example of absolute total absolute total abstinence, by way of example and sacrifice for others, the larger success I hoped for could not be attained. Although previously, through my life, I had taken but little stimulants of any kind, I resolved, for the sake of good example, to give up even that little. From that morning I never wavered in my

allegiance to that cause, and, though loss of health, death itself, and a premature grave as the consequence of cold water drinking were ominously predicted by crowds of friends, I am living still, thank God, a fair old specimen of the beneficial results of total abstinence from all alcoholic drinks. (He lived to eighty years of age).

Years went on under the new auspices, and still I felt that the outcome of the efforts made by my priestly companions and myself was not commensurate with our work. On the whole to me it was unsatisfactory and disappointing. Some further developments should be tried, and the development came in this wise. Some time after I had joined the Society of Jesus I was engaged in a temperance retreat in Belfast at the request of Bishop McAlister. The customary 'spiritual exercises' were performed. Each night St Peter's vast church was packed to overflowing, and the usual Total Abstinence Pledge was administered on the last Sunday to the immense crowd. Such scenes I had frequently witnessed and shared in before. The enthusiasm, the fervour, the apparent resolution to keep the pledge faithfully, the deep roar of voices pronouncing the solemn words of the pledge were all well known and long familiar to me. But the subsequent and alas! the too frequent violation of that undertaking, so frequently demonstrated by experience, stared me in the face and I struck!

I would not any more ask the pledge to be recited aloud and taken indiscriminately by all. Only to those, henceforth, should I administer it, who, on calm reflection, were prepared to make the life sacrifice to total abstinence and give me their names and addresses! Naturally, this view met with opposition on all sides, the procedure was an unbidden innovation, the life engagement was made too drastic, the trial was doomed to failure, for it was believed that the crowds, shrinking from the 'hard word' would go away no better for the Temperance Mission.

FIRST HEROIC OFFERING

However, I was inexorable, and would not yield. On the last Sunday night of the mission in the pulpit of St Peter's, Belfast, I announced the conditions of the new pledge which I styled the 'Heroic Offering'. Contrary to all expectation, about three-hundred adults, the very cream of the congregation, came up to the altar rails and subscribed their names to the new Temperance venture. Thus, we started the 'Heroic Offering' in the capital of the Black North!

Again, some years passed, and still I was not satisfied with the progress of temperance. The thought grew on me apace that what, above all, was needed, as



Clockwise from top left: Mrs A Egan from Rutland Square; Miss Lizzie Power; Mrs A M Sullivan; Mrs M L Bury.

a striking feature of a successful total abstinence crusade, should be the example of sacrifice given to the weaker brethren by those who had no need of the 'Heroic Offering' for themselves. This sacrifice should be unselfishly and cheerfully made for others.

PIONEER ASSOCIATION FOUNDED

To work out this idea, on the 28th December 1898, I invited four ladies to meet me in our presbytery, Gardiner Street, Dublin. These ladies were already veteran and uncompromising total abstainers. Mrs AM Sullivan was the leader of our tiny band. The others were: Mrs Bury, Mrs Egan and Miss Power. At our little round table conference, I informed them briefly of my previous disappointments, and unfolded the new project and my hopes for its success. Was it only to be another dream to be followed by another disillusionment? God alone knew this, but we all hoped at least for the contrary. I then told them that during many years I had endeavoured to begin temperance work at the foot rung of the ladder, by administering the total abstinence pledge to all who sought it, and with results, which, though moderately successful, were by no means, what I had anticipated. Henceforth, with their aid, I said I would begin at the

top rung of the ladder and gradually coming down, would stretch a saving hand to those who needed it below. In other words, into this Pioneer Association, only those whose example of life perseverance we could thoroughly rely would be admitted. Only those could be members who had never taken a strong drink or had taken it in strict moderation, or who, by long probation, had proved their stability in the practice of total abstinence.

The name of the new Association would be the 'Pioneer Total Abstinence League of the Sacred Heart'. It would be composed of two grades – namely, Pioneers and Probationers. Both sections should take the life pledge against all intoxicants. All Pioneers, without exception, should have completed two full years of rigid total abstinence, while probationers were those who were passing through these two years of waiting. Pioneers should be sixteen years of age; probationers could be admitted at fourteen. The juvenile Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart for children under fourteen was also started.

To counteract the tyranny of human respect, to bring our members out into the open, to make them know one another whenever they met, to inspired the courage and comradeship which springs from the

sympathy of members, we determined that all our members should openly wear a distinctive emblem of their undertaking. It would be a pin, pendant or brooch of the Sacred Heart, always publicly worn as an outward visible sign of membership, and as a token by which we might all recognise ourselves as soldiers fighting until death for a noble cause and under the standard of the Heart of Jesus.

Only after a searching investigation, often antecedently, could members be admitted as Pioneers or Probationers by Pioneer Councils established at each 'Centre' of the work. In the year 1905 our Holy Father, Pius X, sent his blessing to the Pioneer enterprise and enriched it with copious indulgences.

TO BEGIN WITH WOMEN

At the beginning of the work, I may state that I intended to admit none but women to our Pioneer membership. I began in this way, because I knew that women have ever been buy word and example the world's greatest social reformers. I knew also that the world, viewed from the moral standpoint, is in a great part for good or for evil, what the women make of it. No word is truer than that. 'The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world,' and so every woman, directly or indirectly, be she wife, mother, daughter or helper, shares in this mysterious privilege and power. Of this fact I was fully convinced despite all countervailing arguments. Moreover, I felt that, as a rule, women deserved exceptional sympathy, because they were the greatest sufferers in the wreckage caused by drink – they were but too often the hidden, silent, uncomplaining victims of its cruelty and of its savagery. It was this insatiable, selfish monster of drink, which robbed themselves and their little ones of housing, food, clothes, education, and religion and extinguished every prospect of betterment in their lives. It was drink which condemned them to hunger, loathsome rags and squalor, until a merciful death came to put an end to their lives of hopeless misery. In fighting for temperance they would be fighting, as no other could fight, for themselves and for their children, for earth and for heaven.

CORK

This eventful meeting of the first four Pioneers took place in December 1898, and immediately preceded my starting for a second time on a missionary enterprise in South Africa. I hoped that during my twelve months of absence that the first battalion of the little Pioneer army, entirely composed of women, would pave the way for future conquest. The women leading the way, I believed that the boys and men, in due course, would surely follow. However, before embarking for this distant missionary undertaking I was one of a number of Jesuits detailed for a mission in the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, here in your own city. In one of the sermons, I explained the origin, scope and conditions of the new movement, and asked for assistance of some brave women in Cork to give it a helping hand that night, there was a hearty response to the appeal. Perhaps a dozen or more, qualified for instant admission, gave in their names, and the work was begun.

FIRST MEN PIONEERS

But on that same night a strange occurrence took place which materially altered the whole plan of my campaign. On leaving the pulpit and reaching the sacristy I was confronted by a number of earnest young men, who complained that they were not allowed to assist in the good cause. I repl that on my return from Africa I had resolved to begin recruiting amongst men for the next battalion of Pioneers. But one, who seemed to be the spokesman of the others retorted: "But Father, if you should never come back, perhaps we should never have a chance of becoming Pioneers at all!"

His reasoning was irresistibly conclusive, I gave way and answered: "Well, in God's name we will start the men's battalion tonight here in Cork"! And so in the old sacristy of Saints Peter and Paul's Church was begun the second great wing of the Pioneer army. Thus too, it fell out that the 'Heroic Offering' originated in Belfast, developed into the Pioneer movement in Dublin and finally was crowned in Cork!

Fr Cullen lived for a further ten years, dying in Dublin on 6 December 1921, the same day as the signing on London of the fateful Anglo-Irish Treaty. – Editor

FATHER JAMES CULLEN MEMORIAL MEDAL

The Father James Cullen Memorial Medal was initially struck in Dublin, Ireland in 1998 to mark the Centenary of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The first recipient of the Medal was Sister Frances Reparata Glavin, a Religious Sister of Charity and indefatigable promoter of temperance in honour of the Sacred Heart over many years of her long life. She had already celebrated her 100th birthday when presented with the Award by Cardinal Desmond Connell, Archbishop of Dublin, in the Church of St Francis Xavier on December 28th, 1998.

The medal features Fr Cullen, the Jesuit Founder of the Association, on one side and the emblem of the Sacred Heart on the other. The attached ribbon is red and violet purple, the colours of the Pioneer Association. Red is symbolic of both the Love of the Sacred Heart for all humanity and the Fire of the Holy Spirit who lives in the hearts of the faithful. The violet purple represents the penitential dimension of the Pioneer commitment, which takes the form of consecrated abstinence from intoxicating drink for life.

The medal itself is worn on special occasions. An accompanying smaller emblem in red and violet purple may be worn more frequently.