



Ancient Order of Hibernians

JOHN CARDINAL D'ALTON DIVISION 3

February 2024

Brother Hibernians_____



I hope you and your family are doing well. If you have kids still in school, hope there was a winter break this week (even if only a long weekend) to take advantage of. If one of those kids is a high school senior – **last call!** Make sure to get your AOH scholarship application in this weekend – deadline extended to Monday.

I look forward to seeing you at our next division meeting at the Hibernian House **tonight, Friday, February 23rd at 8:00pm**. Aside from discussing the upcoming events of 2024, we do have elections for the posts of Division Treasurer and Division Marshal.

Not only are on about to enter the St. Patrick's Day "parade" season, but it means we are on the cusp of Irish American Heritage Month. We will be sharing more in the coming weeks from national to make sure we focus on this, as it is one of our fundamental principles for the Order.

Another element of "the parade season" is making sure we represent our Division with a good number of marchers, particularly as we 'march down Central Ave' behind our Grand Marshal, Division 3's Neil Cosgrove. It is a short walk, and in my mind, the best way to view the parade – and it still leaves you time to enjoy whatever other festivities you have planned. Please plan on marching with us!

As always, interesting goings-on at the Hibernian House with fun crowds. A special congratulations to Bill Boera and Mike Mulcahy for kicking off the monthly drawing to benefit House capital improvements – see more details in the Hibernian House article.

Good & Welfare –Please say a prayer for Robert Davis's father, Dan Davis – may he rest in peace. Also, please continue to pray for the quick recovery of Bob Reers who had spinal surgery – latest update is that he is making progress and grinding through physical therapy.

As always, we pray that you and your family are healthy and safe.

Yours in Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity,

Chuck Parnow

Upcoming Events



Event	Timing	Details
Emerald Ball	Sat., 2/24	Pearl River Hilton
Murder Mystery Theater: "Top of the Mourning" *	Fri., 3/1	Tickets @ pub; questions, reach out to LAOH or Dennis
St. Patrick's Day Senior Luncheon	Sat., 3/9	As always, need lots of volunteers
Golf Committee Meetings	Next meeting is Tuesday, 3/9	Will be held weekly on Tuesdays after St. Patrick's Day
Comhaltas Traditional Irish Music Night	Fri, 3/15	Evening at Hibernian House – a great night of traditional Irish music.
NYC St. Patrick's Day parade	Sat, 3/16	Rockland AOH stepping off at 2:30 at E. 47 th and 5 th Ave.
Rockland County St. Patrick's Day parade	Sun, 3/17, stepping off at 1:45pm	Group forming at Pfizer parking lot at 1pm. Article follows.
Rockland GAA Memorial 5k Race	Sat. 3/30 at 11am	Signup online at: https://runsignup.com/Race/Events/NY/Orangeburg/RocklandGAAMemorial5K

* questions, call Dennis Madigan: (914) 714-8287

AOH Scholarships



For those last-minute people, this is your last weekend. Signup details:

Please see the following page of the state AOH website for all details:

<https://www.nyaoh.com/aoh-scholarship-contest>.

Note: (1) The application is a fillable pdf (on the website) and easy to complete. (2) All high school seniors who are members, and children or grandchildren of a member belonging to a NYS AOH division are eligible to apply for this state scholarship, (3) note that eligibility is narrower for the Division scholarships - to be eligible for the Division scholarship, a high school senior must either be a member, or the child of a member who has been with the Division for at least three years. Any questions, reach out to Dermot's email (above) or to praoh3@gmail.com.

St. Patrick's Parades



We will once again be marching in the Rockland County St. Patrick's Day parade, and we are thrilled to be marching behind our own Grand Marshal – Neil Cosgrove, as well as Division 3's honoree as Aide to the NYC Parade Grand Marshal, Sean Walsh. Since a Division 3 member is Grand Marshal, we already have a number of members committed to carrying the flags at the beginning of the parade. So, it's even more important to get others to march with the Division. Please let's make it a point to have a strong contingent, smartly dressed, marching behind our Battalion Commander, Dan Sullivan. Let's represent the AOH on this, "our day".

For the NYC parade, we, as a County, need marchers including those to carry the banners. We step off at 2:30pm from 47th Street between 5th and Madison, but the RCAOH pipe band will have a bus with limited seating leaving earlier. More to come on that timing.

And a quick note on national membership cards – there were some delays in the national AOH cards being mailed out from national to our Financial Secretary, Dan Sullivan, as we just received them yesterday. But we do have them now – for those around and visiting the pub you can pick them up there. We'll begin mailing them out in the following weeks, so you should see them soon. A big thank you to Ray Lynch who has stepped in as interim National Secretary and please continue keep our national secretary, Ed Halligan, recovering from a stroke in your prayers.

Annual Golf Outing



Division 3 sponsors only two major fundraisers a year, and our spring event is our annual golf outing. The outing takes a tremendous amount of effort by a large group of people and that effort will kick off this coming Thursday, with an organizational meeting of the Golf Committee – meeting will be held Tuesday, March 5th at 7pm. Come on out and join the gang – it's work, but it's fun and you don't have to be a golfer to help run a golf outing!

Hibernian House



The Hibernian House had their first monthly drawing in the special Hibernian House capital fund raffle. Our initial winners were: 1st place (\$1,000): 91, 2nd place (\$250): 73, 3rd place (\$150): 4. Note, these are drawing numbers and aren't necessarily related to your AOH number. Next drawing is tonight at the Division meeting.

We've had great participation, but there's always room for more to join. If you want to join for the March drawing, it's \$100 dollars (\$10 per month you're in). Just see a bartender or drop us a note at prach3@gmail.com.

Again, a big thanks to Bill Boera and Mike Mulcahy for putting all the time in needed to get this set up. This will allow us to continue to address improvement issues around the House, so that we have an event spot of which we're all proud.

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The Murder of Fr. James Coyle, a Forgotten Travesty of Justice



The 1920s marked one of American history's darkest and least discussed chapters. During this period, the Ku Klux Klan experienced a resurgence, propelled by various factors, including D. W. Griffith's controversial portrayal of the Klan in "Birth of a Nation" (originally titled "The Klansman"), a complex mix of patriotism and isolationism following World War I, and the adoption of modern marketing techniques. As a result, the Klan transcended its Southern roots, evolving into a nationwide movement with a staggering membership of six million. To sustain this growth, the Klan expanded its targets of hatred to remain relevant, including adding anti-Catholicism to its twisted mission.

Among the countless victims and perpetrators of this shameful campaign of bigotry and violence, two names stand out: Fr. James Coyle and Hugo Black, who would in his life wear the robes of a Klansman and a U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

Fr. James Coyle was born in Drum, County Roscommon. He attended Mungret College in Limerick and the Pontifical North American College in Rome and was ordained a priest at age 23 on May 30, 1896. Fr. Coyle would leave his homeland forever, sailing to Mobile, Alabama, whose mines and industry were fueling explosive growth and attracting many Catholic immigrants, including the Irish.

After an initial assignment as an instructor and rector at the McGill Institute for Boys, Fr. Coyle was appointed the pastor of St. Paul's Church in Birmingham, where he became beloved by his congregation and respected by many of the non-Catholic community. Fr. Coyle quickly became known as a champion for fair treatment for the poor and marginalized of all communities; his personal mantra was "*Give, give till it hurts- then and only then is there sacrifice.*"

However, the growing Catholic community of Birmingham coincided with growing prejudice and the resurgence of the Klan. Fr. Coyle was quick to respond to newspaper attacks on Catholicism with his own letters deriding the misinformation and ignorance of bigots. Fr. Coyle was often the recipient of anonymous death threats, but that did not dissuade him from publicly defending and espousing his faith.

The Klan's anti-Catholicism was epitomized by another local clergyman. Edwin Stephenson. Stephenson was an ordained Methodist deacon but styled himself as a minister for his occupation of being a "marrying parson" at the Jefferson County Courthouse, which was on the same block as Fr. Coyle's St. Paul's. Stephenson was also a member of Robert E. Lee Klavern No. 1, the first Alabama chapter of the new Ku Klux Klan. Stephenson described Fr. Coyle as 'one of humanity's biggest enemies.'

Stephenson had a daughter, Ruth, who often rebelled against her Father's rigid rules. Living merely a block from St. Paul's, Ruth became fascinated by Catholic traditions despite her Father's vehement criticisms of the faith. When she turned 18, she started secretly attending classes on the Catholic faith and was eventually baptized as a Catholic. When Edwin Stephenson discovered her conversion, he threatened to kill his daughter. Ruth fled her Father's threat to live with a local Catholic couple. Stephenson went to the Birmingham police chief, a fellow Klansman, to report that Ruth had been "kidnapped by Catholics." Still considered underage, the police returned her to her Father, where she was beaten with a leather strap after her mother stuffed a rag in her mouth to muffle her screams.

If Stephenson's aim was breaking Ruth's independent nature, it failed. Ruth had been hiding another secret: she was engaged to a Puerto Rico man named Pedro Gussman. The couple secretly obtained a marriage license in another town,

but finding no priest there, they returned to Birmingham and Fr. Coyle. After carefully inspecting the license, Fr. Coyle performed the ceremony. After the Ceremony, Fr. Coyle told Ruth that the first thing she must do is inform her parents.

Three hours after the ceremony, Fr. Coyle was sitting on the porch of his rectory praying his breviary; Edwin Stephenson calmly walked up to the porch, pulled a gun, and shot Fr. Coyle at point blank range in the head, killing him. Stephenson then walked calmly to the courthouse and surrendered to police, saying, *'It's all right, gentlemen, I know what I'm doing.'*

What followed was one of the greatest travesties of American justice. Despite the brutality of the murder and the clear evidence of Stephenson's act, it took weeks for the state to indict him. In response, the Klan hired and paid for his lawyer - future U.S. Senator and Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black.

Stephenson's original defense team had pleaded not guilty because of temporary insanity. Black entered an additional plea of self-defense even though it was clear that Stephenson had no gun. It soon became apparent that Black's defense would rest on the Klan's platform, that Catholics were a threat, and that Stephenson was defending his family. In doing so, Black transformed a murder case that had drawn national attention into a soapbox for the Klan's anti-Catholic agenda.

The resulting trial was a farce. The judge, the jury foreman, several jurors, and the key witness, the police chief, were all Klan members. Throughout the trial, Black and the defense team portrayed Gussman as African American, even going so far as to draw the blinds to make him appear darker. When the prosecution described Gussman as being of "*proud Castilian descent*," the defense responded, "*he has descended a long way.*" Hugo Black attacked the only two witnesses that came forward for the prosecution, asking them if they were Catholic and then calling them "brothers in falsehood, as well as in faith,"

Stephenson was acquitted after the jury deliberated less than a day. For weeks after, he was toasted as a hero, and he lived as a free man in the Birmingham area for another 35 years before dying in 1956. The murder of Fr. Coyle, like the persecution of Catholics by the Ku Klux Klan, is little remembered. Hugo Black would later become a member of the Ku Klux Klan himself, only renouncing his membership when he aspired to a career as a U.S. Senator (but then thanked the Klan for their support when he was elected). Black would later be appointed to the Supreme Court and is lionized and memorialized for his civil rights, his anti-Catholic bigotry dismissed as "a sign of his times," and his Klan membership as political pragmatism. We would be right to ask, "Where is the justice for Fr. Coyle?"