

# St. Charles of Mount Argus



**“The Man I Knew”**

by  
Fr. Eugene Nevin  
Passionist



## Saint Charles – The Soldier

Conscription being embodied in the laws of his native country, Father Charles was obliged to submit to a course of military training, and to spend some of his youth in the soldier's uniform.

The training he received while attached to the army had a marked influence on his after life. The skill and dexterity and self control then acquired in preparation for battles never to be fought, were useful to him in the lifelong struggle he waged as a good soldier of Christ under the banner of the Cross.

There was a story current about his soldiering days, that in some disturbance or other when the military were called out and ordered to fire, he, lest he might hurt someone, pointed his rifle the wrong way and narrowly missed shooting his superior Officer.

The story may have had no foundation whatsoever in fact — probably it had not — but I once heard him chuckle about it.

He laughed neither denied nor affirmed, but as was usual with him, endeavoured to adroitly turn such little pleasantries to spiritual advantage. This he did by telling us of the strict discipline they in the army had to undergo, the deference shown to petty officers, the obedience they were obliged to submit to, looking neither to right hand or to left, and never daring to question even in thought an order given.

Thus did he point to the moral of religious discipline, so mild, so humane, and freely undertaker for the highest and holiest of purposes.

When requested he would lift or hum, the Dutch National Anthem, beating time the while with his hands. The animation he

showed on such occasions bordered on the marvellous for one of his years, attenuated figure, and dispositions. For the moment he was in spirit far away. Borne on its reminiscent strains he crossed the chasm of intervening years and was back again to those days when as a youth tramp, tramp, tramp he marched, with military accoutrement of musket and knapsack, to its soul-stirring strains.

For martial music he seemed to have a particular penchant, the result perhaps of his early training. Whenever military bands passed within earshot, and they did fairly often in those far off days, he was a most attentive listener until the music gradually died away in the distance.



**St. Charles – The Soldier  
c. 1841 – Aged 20 years.**



## Saint Charles - A Man with a Smile

Though we looked upon Father Charles almost as a being belonging to another world who had but little concern with the affairs of men; and in our imaginations saw the nimbus of God's holy ones surround and accompany him whithersoever he went; though these were the reverential feelings with which his familiar associates ever regarded him, it must not be thought that there was no human side to his character: that he could not be interested in anything having the least tinge of the mundane in it. The direct contrary was the case; so much so indeed, that he seemed to have a strong sense of humour, could be as natural as anyone on occasions, enjoy an evening's recreation, and when called upon to sing, acquit himself very creditably.

But neither did he for ever sit "like a grand-sire cast in alabaster" for the merriest of twinkles would sparkle in his eyes, and the happiest of smiles wreath his face. Aye, and there was the mirthful laugh too at times that did one good to see and hear him indulge in. Never did I see a frown profane or faintest shadow of anger darken his benign and placid countenance but the oft repeated reference to himself as "poor old Charlie" had an unmistakable touch of humour in it.

To meet him on corridor or staircase was to feel as if a ray of sunshine had suddenly shone across one's path. Silently and softly the bending figure would glide by as usual wrapt in Divine Contemplation; always close to the wall, apparently to avoid being in the way of others more active than himself.

Never did he meet even the youngest student or brother without uncovering. And when anyone barred his passage by kneeling before him for a blessing, as frequently happened, to feel his holy hands pressing gently on one's head was to experience an accession of strength and to be assured somehow that everything would be all right for that day at least.



St. Charles at 70 years of age



## Saint Charles – Celebrating Mass

To assist at his offering of The Holy Sacrifice was to see a man swayed and animated by the most powerful emotions that can influence a human being; agitated at times to trepidation by the contrasted feelings of reverential love and fear mutually contending within his bosom. It was, in fine, to see a man who realized to the full the tremendous nature of the high office he was called upon to perform.

He did not say Mass in the Church for two or three years before his death except one Sunday that I remember when it became a matter of necessity owing to the large number of Fathers absent on missions. But I am afraid he was not much of a success then from the public point of view. He was too slow, an hour being his usual length in his later years. Indeed were he left to himself and unassisted he would likely on occasions have gone far beyond the limits of the hour.

Rarely as long as I knew him did he celebrate without tears, very copious were it a feast in any way relating to The Passion; for he paid special attention to the Mass of the day following it word for word. There would be long pauses in which he seemed to have lost himself; sobs and tears and turnings aside of the face with frequent use of the handkerchief. As he celebrated in the choir after the Father Spiritual Director it fell to our lot as students to serve his Mass. This we shall ever look upon as amongst our greatest privileges; though the student whose turn it was would be still serving when his companions had their day's work well under way.

When more than usually fervent by reason of the feast or from some other cause, the pauses became more frequent and progress in consequence more slow, portending the danger of unconscionable lengthening. On such occasions someone would whisper "Go for Father Salvian!" It was our only remedy students without orders as we were. Word is brought to Father Salvian, who on entering takes a small stole from his breast pocket throws it on and stands beside Father Charles on the predalla. The effect is always electrical. Not a word for the present is spoken; but Father Charles well knows the meaning of the manoeuvre; and he needs not to be told to hurry up, for hurry he does in no unmistakable fashion under the reproachful eyes of his mentor.

Soon however a stronger influence governs him, and under its sway the figure standing close to him becomes shadowy and gradually fades away, when he is again alone with God giving way to demonstrations as before. But Father Salvian is never slow to remind him of his presence by a gentle tap on the shoulder and a mild if not a trifle profane command "Go on Charlie, go on".

Other methods obtained with those who served him in the days when he said mass in public as they can still testify. They had instructions to pluck sharply at his vestments whenever he stopped for any considerable time; and so bring him back to earth.





## Saint Charles – A Man of Music

We now come to speak of Father Charles' love of music, the one passion he had if we may call it by such a name, what has been aptly termed the language of the soul. There was no mistaking Father Charles' love of music for it manifested itself whenever a reasonable occasion occurred.

In the Liturgical Offices of the Church or in the musical portions of our observance in Choir, he always took an active, sometimes a leading part, entering into the spirit of his work with all the fervour of his devoted soul. His voice was strong, and could even be stentorian though correct and pleasing at its loudest note. But in the excess of his fervour, at particular words appealing to his devotion, he would lose himself in an exaggerated loudness, knocking all others out of tune; and not infrequently out of countenance also. The Ave Maria he could render beautifully, and delightful it was to see and hear him as he rhythmically swayed to and fro to its musical swell and cadence.

On a few privileged occasions he taught or attempted to teach it and some others of his favourite pieces to us students. As in every class there is sure to be found, in a musical sense, the good, the indifferent, the bad, and the impossible. So we were no exception to the general rule. There was one particularly unpromising specimen amongst us who could make plenty of noise without producing the faintest approach to music. But he could and did succeed, to our teacher's discomfiture, in drowning all the others. Then would follow a battle royal of vociferated "music", Father Charles raising his voice in opposition and doing his utmost to lead. But the contest though amusing, invariably proved unequal; youth and superior lung-power never failing to win. Thus did the few lessons we had from him, despite his earnestness, end in good-natured fiasco.



St. Charles – aged 42 years



St. Mary Magdalen Altar  
where St. Charles often said Mass



## Saint Charles – Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

His devotion to Mary combined the simplicity of the child with all the strength and constancy of which his firm character was capable.

To those who came to him he invariably recommended devotion to Mary and in the ceremonial formalities accompanying his blessing he always made them repeat after him prayers to her, prayers for the most part composed by himself.

His cell held an immense quantity of scraps of paper with prayers of his own composition - golden mint straight from the glowing furnace of his loving affectionate heart. One of them I have now before me written in pencil, which I will take the liberty of transcribing here. It is headed "Prayer to the Immaculate Mother of God," and it not only expresses his love of her and confidence in her power, but also what was habitual with him, his dread of ever doing anything displeasing to her Divine Son -



Our Lady of Holy Hope

"O My Great Angel Guardian, and my patron saint, and all "ye holy angels and saints, unite your prayers to mine, and together let us beseech our Glorious and Heavenly Queen to obtain for me all the most efficacious graces that I may never commit any willful sin. And that she may receive me as her child, guide my steps through this sinful world; assist me at the hour of my death, obtain for me a very happy one with a favourable Judgment and conduct my soul to the Throne of God there to enjoy the glory of The Most Adorable Trinity. Amen. So be it."

His most oft repeated ejaculation was "Mary, Mary." Never did he pass by her statue or hear her sweet name mentioned without reverently uncovering and bowing his head. Indeed his love for the Queen of Heaven with the affectionate manner in which he was accustomed to speak of her would lead one to conclude the this devotion was not in the same degree as ordinary mortals but that he must have been favoured visions of her greatness, her beauty, her power.





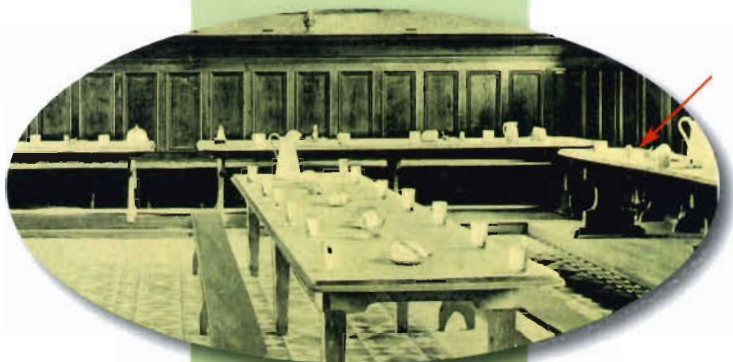
## Saint Charles – The ‘Vision’ in the Refectory

One ecstatic moment of his I can never forget, so deep an impression did it make on me. It occurred, of all places, in the refectory or dining hall. But it is perhaps all the more valuable on that account, because it will convey to the minds of those who had not the privilege of knowing him personally an idea of how much he was always absorbed in God, no matter what his occupation. With us the life of a saint or other spiritual book is read at table except during the collation taken on the evening of fast days, and this particular occasion happened to be one of them. Everything was going on as usual, the customary silence being observed, but through the silence came the softly whispered ejaculations of Father Charles.

Suddenly he started up from his seat with wonderful agility calling aloud the name “Mary, Mary.” Throwing down his serviette, placing his left hand over his heart, with right extended on high, he became transfixed and motionless as a statue, his upturned gaze fixed on a point in the lofty ceiling. I looked, all looked, at the same point expecting to see something. We, of

course, saw nothing, but a thrill of awe went through everyone for we felt that something extraordinary had happened. For some moments, moments seem hours in some of the events of life, he remained in that ecstatic attitude, fit, subject for the artist’s brush, until the Superior brought him back to himself by calling out loudly “Father Charles, Father Charles! You are disturbing the Community!” Then he resumed his former position as if nothing out of the common had occurred.

Naturally enough the incident being so remarkable made a deep impression on me, and I remember it still as vividly as if it were but a thing of yesterday only. I thoroughly believed then as did everybody present, and time has not altered my conviction, that he saw what was not granted to us to see.



St. Charles’s place in Refectory (Dining Room)



## Saint Charles – The Prayer Service

Owing to the great numbers daily visiting him stated times were appointed by the superior so that he might have some small intervals of freedom to himself. Otherwise like the Apostles he would not have had “so much as time to eat” Mark 6. 31. At any of those appointed hours, it was interesting to watch the proceedings, and those who did so cannot easily forget the affecting scenes.

The first church erected at Mount Argue was then standing at right angles to the present structure and along the line now occupied by the Cemetery Gates. Here it was the people foregathered three times a day to receive his blessing, and listen to his instructions and advice.

A little ahead of the appointed times a leaning pensive figure would be seen to emerge by slow degrees from beneath the pillared portal of the Monastery door, seemingly oblivious to all such contingencies as arrangements of time and place.

Sometimes little groups would be waiting, sometimes none, for the people naturally collected where they knew they were sure to meet him. But in a few moments, as if by magic, ones and twos and threes would come out, apparently from nowhere, grouping themselves around him, the men uncovering, the women in prayerful attitude.

Grown to fair proportions a go-as-you-please procession moved in the direction of the old church, so slowly that the distance of less than a hundred paces ordinarily took about half an hour. This was because he made of it a miniature Via Dolorosa or road to Calvary with many stopping places where he got the people to meditate on scenes in The Passion, and repeat after him prayers in honour of the Sufferings of Christ and The Sorrows of His Blessed Mother.



## Saint Charles and The Healings

Whatever may be said or thought of the gift of miracles as a proof of sanctity, Father Charles had a wide reputation for healing in his day. From all parts of the English-speaking world letters came to him by every post requesting his prayers and blessing in illness or distress of whatsoever kind; and such an enduring reputation is not acquired without solid reasons for its foundation. That, consequent on his blessing and prayers, extraordinary restorations to health took place is beyond a doubt, some coming under the notice of members of the community, others vouched for on unimpeachable authority.

He himself was the greatest miracle, living all those years so wholly dedicated to his vocation; his heart a living holocaust on the Altar of Divine Love; his every act, his every thought, his very breath a prayer.

The people's faith and confidence in the efficacy of his prayers and blessing was so great that they believed almost all things possible to him. Hence it was that when all earthly remedies had faded in illnesses his aid was invoked, not infrequently with the happiest of consequences.

Years after his death a lady living away in the country told me one of her sons, when a boy, suffered from a complaint which several doctors pronounced incurable. In great distress she brought him to Father Charles, explained the case fully, and ended up by saying “Now Father Charles, you must cure him.” He smiled amusedly and answered “Well! I suppose if I must, I must.” Her confidence and earnest entreaty were amply rewarded for at the time she spoke to me her “boy” was a doctor with a large practice in Australia.

Nor was this confidence in him limited to any one particular class or condition of people. It was shared by all; rich and poor, lay and cleric alike, being numbered amongst his admirers and his client.





An Archbishop from a foreign country to whose distant diocese Father Charles' reputation had reached, after conversing with him for some time knelt down and asked his blessing. It was a distressing moment for the humility of the good Father who all shame and confusion with greatest unwillingness consented.

## Saint Charles – The 'corrections' by Fr. Salvian

His reputation for sanctity reaching the Father General of the day, he was anxious to meet him and make his acquaintance. He did so on visitation and was deeply impressed by his spirit prayer, and to the degree of his union with God. Before returning to Rome he commissioned Father Salvian to closely watch Father Charles, take note of anything extraordinary in his life, and as occasion served, to put his virtue to the proof. Kindliest and gentlest of souls, Fr. Salvian yet gave this latter instruction such a liberal interpretation as was hardly consistent with his tenderness of heart and well-known character for mildness. There were times, I must confess, when he certainly tried his patience to the breaking point, if such there were in it.

He would correct him, scold him and humiliate him before the whole community, thus adding immensely, I am sure, to his merit, for of course Father Charles knew nothing of Father General's secret instructions. He never showed the least sign of resentment; nor did he seek to explain or excuse himself but remained silent and penitent, looking as if he had been guilty of some great crime. If he did speak at all he confined himself to the three words 'poor old Charlie'.

One occasion I well remember because of the amusement it afforded. Father Salvian, assuming a severity of which his kindly nature did not possess an atom, rounded on Father Charles in right royal fashion before us about some imaginary trifling fault; and at the height of his simulated rage turned and walked away. We interested spectators of the scene, the purpose of which we were aware, were amazed and very much amused, when Father Charles pointed after his well meaning tormentor, then tapped his own forehead with his forefinger, thus conveying in the familiar but by no means vulgar manner, a jocular hint at the expense of Father Salvian's sanity.



St. Charles's – The Healer



Fr. Salvian C.P.



## Saint Charles – The Passion of Jesus.

As might be expected Father Charles had a great devotion to The Passion. The Sufferings and Death of Christ, besides being manifest proofs of God's love for us, are also in turn the strongest incentives to man's love for God.

The simplest discourse on The Passion moved Saint Charles to tears. During the reading of the meditation which takes place every day in choir, it was touching and edifying to see him lean forward hand to ear straining to catch every word, eager that none of its golden treasure should be lost to him.

The atmosphere of Gethsemane and Golgotha pervaded his whole life lending colour to everything he said or did. To him the Passion was not an abstraction, no mere historical event, but very real, very recent. Not even an occurrence of yesterday. It was always of the present.

Little needed he be reminded of Calvary, for it was never absent from his thoughts. Nevertheless he invariably carried about him a small crucifix, sometimes placed on top of his little devotional manuals as seen in the photo, but more often locked in his left hand palm. From time to time he could be seen to open the hand, look affectionately at the Crucifix and raise it tenderly to his lips. I saw it after his death showing abundant signs of long and frequent use.

The Stations or Way of The Cross was one of his favourite devotions, though by no means an easy performance from the difficulty he experienced in kneeling and rising unsupported. But that only made it all the more dear to him. He generally practised the devotion in the seclusion of the religious choir or oratory, where he was free from any interruption or distraction, a luxury not likely to be allowed him in the public church.

But possibly his greatest outward manifestation of devotion to Our Lord's Sufferings was shown, despite of his efforts to keep his feelings under control, when singing The Passion in the Church on Palm Sunday and Good Friday mornings. Many of the general public must still retain affecting recollections of the deep impression his singing of The Passion made on all who heard him.

His part during the years I knew him, was always that of Christus which suited his style of voice admirably. But it was still more in accord with his sentiments in that he had to sing the words of Our Lord in the garden, in His trial, condemnation and Death. His very appearance was striking as he entered the sanctuary accompanied by the two priests appointed for the other parts vested in alb and broad stole. All three take their places before the prepared lecterns.

The singing of The Passion is perhaps the most impressively solemn of the Holy Week services. Recalling as it does so vividly the awful tragedy commemorated, little effort is required to imagine oneself living the whole scene over again. With Father Charles taking so prominent a part this became much more easy. Entering wholeheartedly into the meaning and spirit of the words, he soon became lost to his surroundings, overwhelmed by grief in the sympathy he felt for the Divine Victim. There would be many long pauses, unobtrusive it is true, but necessary to suppress the sob and wipe away those tears that dim the page.

Now the deep sonorous voice tremulous with emotion as he sings from the Latin text the words of Christ in Gethsemane "My soul is sorrowful even unto death ... Father, if it be possible let his chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt." (Matt. 26-38,39). Again the high pitch that reverberates throughout the building and gradually toned down to a whisper as the Gentle Lamb of God confronts and



confounds his enemies. "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou Me?" (John 18-23) There would be tears in more eyes than Father Charles' before he had finished for no preacher could introduce such effects as he did by his appearance and general bearing during his singing of The Passion. It was the important feature of the Mount Argus Holy Week services in those days.



## Saint Charles – and Hell

Amongst the spiritual books be valued highly was a small volume, well-known and widely read at the time, in which the physical sufferings of the damned were described with a gruesome realism calculated to appal even the stout of heart. But they were none too much for him, who in those sufferings found an additional incentive to union with God in order to make sure his calling and election.

He was often seen to go to the kitchen, open the range, and contemplate the blazing fire, remarking how great must be the heat of those fires kindled by the Breath of an Angry God.



We Preach Christ Crucified

There was then not far from the Monastery a brick field, whose furnaces looked fierce and threatening in the darkness of the night. On a Winter's evening he used to take a position at one of the windows commanding a view of them, and remain long in a meditative mood. If accosted, as I know he was, now and again, he would point in the direction of the furnaces and say "See!" And then after a pause "O! the sufferings of the lost, and I deserve all for my sins. O! God be merciful to me a sinner." After another pause, and borrowing the words of St. Augustine for the expression of thoughts similar to his, he would exclaim, "hic seca, hic ure, sed parce in aeternum" (Cut here, burn here, but spare me in eternity) beating his breast the while.

Such was the atmosphere in which he lived, dying daily in thought, and judging himself with utmost severity. But in all, and high above everything else reigned a hope supernatural in the Mercy and Kindness of Him he loved from ever giving way to despondency, and strengthened him in his every resolve.



Little Crucifix of St. Charles



## Entering and Leaving the Choir

The Blessed Sacrament being so intimately connected with The Passion, and a perpetual memorial of it occupied the same large place in his heart.

How well I can recall, and how pleasant the recalling, his devout demeanour as he entered the choir where we chant the Divine Office and where all our religious exercises are performed. With left hand far into one corner of his biretta which he held closely up to his face, he would dip rather deeply the fingers of his right hand in the holy water stoup and fairly drench his forehead over.

Then with measured step while in the act of crossing himself he proceeded to the centre, his leaning figure bending profoundly low. By reason of the accident, to which allusion has been made elsewhere, he was unable to genuflect without support. He therefore walked straight to the altar, laid his hand on its lower step went down on one knee, at the same time generally ejaculating 'Jesus! Jesus'. Rising by aid of his right hand support, and making a graceful obeisance towards the Tabernacle he passed on to his accustomed place in the Stalls.

In leaving, practically the same procedure reversed was observed; but before finally quitting the Divine Presence, which he always did according to Rule backwards, he lingered longingly for some time at the door. With right hand resting on the holy water stoup edge and wistful look at the Tabernacle, he remained so for several seconds and then with evident reluctance departed.



## Saint Charles – Morning Prayer

The period of thanksgiving (after Mass in the morning) Father Charles invariably spent between the choir sacristy and the flight of stone steps leading to the organ-loft. That it was long I know, that it was fervent we need I think have no doubt. Why he chose those two places I have mentioned may be for two reasons.

First, the unlikelihood of being disturbed there; and secondly because they were both cold and uncomfortable – extremely so in the Winter, since they were devoid of any means whatsoever of heating. If ordinarily he was on fire with the love of God, and there was every indication that this was his normal state, his heart must have been a veritable furnace after Mass. Nothing else can account for the fact that even on the coldest days of Winter he would throw open the window and remain long in front of it bareheaded and without protection of the mantle worn by us outside of the Summertime.

I remember going to him for some reason or other on a few occasions during his thanksgiving. Once or twice he was sitting on a faldstool opposite the open window through which blew an icy breeze from the snow covered fields and hills around. The other occasions, with face buried in his hands, he leaned on the window-sill, immovable.





## Saint Charles – Evening Prayer



Stalls in Mount Argus Choir (Oratory)  
St. Charles was right of centre

Whenever possible night or day he paid visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Of what passed between him and The Master in those heart to heart talks we may and judge from the, fervour of his life only, since during them he made himself as invisible to human eye as his ingenuity could devise. His favourite place in the daytime was the organ loft, which is reached without leaving the monastery or going through the Church,

where a crowd was always sure to gather round him. He was undisturbed in the organ loft and reckoned he was also unobserved.

At night and in the winter evening his spare time was spent chiefly in the Choir, a fact we students had ample opportunities of knowing, it being our duty, in turn, to prepare the altar overnight for Mass the following morning.

As we get there for our work silence reigns supreme darkness is over all save for the fitful flicker of the Sanctuary lamp. But when light is introduced and every nook and corner gives up its secret, then is revealed the grey head resting on the bench in some out of the way place. This became so common an experience that we quite expected it as a matter of course after a while.



Top Step of Stairs to Organ Loft



Choir Sacristy – Window and  
Door to Stairs to Organ Loft



## Saint Charles and the Love of Nature

Father Charles had no desire for ordinary conversation; nor for anything that did not savour of God or the things of God, though he was far from being cold or insensible to the tales of woe and misery daily and hourly poured into his ear. To many a poor bruised and broken heart did his kind words of sympathy bring the balm of consolation. Always mindful to the appeal of the sufferer, his healing touch and blessing brought comfort and sometimes complete cure, when all other remedies had failed.

But though he was at all times ready to listen to the pleadings of the poor and stricken, and rendered what assistance was in his power, he ever longed to be away in some quiet spot where he could hold free and uninterrupted converse with God. This desire was a constant source of trouble to the Brother Porter for it generally took Father Charles out of earshot of the community call bell, and he was wanted at all times of the day by people coming often from distant parts of Ireland.

On such occasions he was generally found in some obscure out of the way nook of the monastery or church; sometimes in the garden, as he was a strong advocate of fresh air. He was too a keen lover of flowers whose beauty spoke to him of God.

A picture of him as he thus wanders forth remains in my memory with all the freshness of yesterday upon it. It was the early Summertime with its flowers and its birds and he struck down a garden walk of which there is a good view from the back Monastery windows. I watched him, for it was our wont, surrounding him as we did

with mystery and expecting at any moment to witness the extraordinary. However the extraordinary did not on this occasion happen but the very ordinary though in a very pleasing manner.

The bright sunshine, the music of singing bird and humming bee, the sight and fragrance of flower and blossom all alike disappear before the Heavenly music that is in his soul. And so, manifestly oblivious to all surroundings, Father Charles moves slowly on in characteristic attitude, his emaciated figure bending low, left hand holding a small crucifix in its palm close up to his lips, right hand now and then lifting his biretta.

As he goes quietly along two kittens, playful as is their nature, chanced to be in the vicinity, eager to catch at anything that may serve as an object for their sport. No great difficulty with them surely since "a shadow or a bit of string will serve their purpose well." But Father Charles with his slow uneven and continued movement seemed the very thing desired. Taking up crouching positions on both sides of the walk behind box tree border, as if by preconcerted signal, they would pounce out on the slow moving figure striking his habit with their tiny claws, and their object accomplished darting back again to the jungle among the cultivated plants and flowers. He must have afforded them infinite merriment, while all unconscious of either their presence or their pranks, he moved slowly along rapt in divine contemplation. For the whole length of the long walk he was accompanied by the gambolling little pair repeating their tricks at short intervals.





## Saint Charles – Dressed for Town

Father Charles' wearing apparel was of the poorest; habit and mantle being old, worn-out and patched. But poverty and humility are quite compatible with strictest neatness and cleanliness, whereas slovenliness and dirt as personal adjuncts are always and everywhere superlatively disgusting. To these latter Father Charles was a declared enemy, and a great believer in the doctrine which expresses itself in soap and water. His daily very thorough ablutions in the community wash hall are matters of clear recollection with his intimate associates, even to this day.

The cell he occupied, with little in it to be disturbed, he kept, as might be expected, well arranged and in good order.

Towards the end of his life he seldom appeared in secular dress; and because it was seldom, it was strange, occasioning no small amusement amongst us students – Father Charles in secular dress seemed to us so incongruous a thing. When therefore he did appear for the first time in a long period, the signal ran along the line in that mysterious manner in which things become known so quickly in all colleges, boarding-schools and some say Convents, in

broadcloth, silk hat and umbrella looking nearly as old as himself, ill-fitting, a bit crumpled and very much the worse of the wear. As he walked along the corridor close to the wall, observed by all furtive observers there, he could not help noticing how keenly interested they were in his wonderful transformation. And he enjoyed it too; for the happiest of smiles lit up his dear old face until he was clear of them and of the house, and away on his mission of mercy to some poor sick person in the city.

The last time he thus appeared was 14th October, 1892, less than three months before his death. Generally speaking he visited the sick in his religious habit and accompanied by a Brother. His presence away from home never failing to draw crowds of admirers about him, a thing very distasteful to his humility, he shunned going out as much as possible and rarely during his last three years did he go beyond the limits of the Monastery grounds.



A 'cell' or room in Mount Argus c.1900 as St. Charles would have lived in



The Back Garden – Mount Argus



## Saint Charles – Fact file

- 1821 – Born in Munstergeleen in Holland.
- 1845 – Joined the Passionists in Ere, Belgium.
- 1850 – Ordained a Passionist Priest
- 1852 – Arrived in England and worked in Aston Hall, Cotton Hall and London
- 1857 – Arrived in Mount Argus, involved in saying mass, hearing confessions and blessing people. Recognised as a 'holy' man.
- 1866 – Transferred to England and spends five years in Parish work in St. Anne's Sutton.
- 1874 – Returned to Mount Argus, People flock to the man with a saintly reputation. Many healings reported.
- 1893 - Died in Mount Argus and thousands come to his funeral.

## Fr. Eugene Nevin C.P. 1868-1957

"What kind of man was Father Charles?" This was the question that Fr. Eugene Nevin, C.P. asked himself in 1928 as he sat down to write some notes on what he remembered of the Saintly Father Charles. Fr. Eugene had lived in Mount Argus on the same corridor as Father Charles during the last three years of Father Charles' life. As a student preparing for priesthood Fr. Eugene remarked that he had many opportunities of observing Father Charles and at times of speaking to him.

Father Eugene was born at Ballinakill, Co. Galway, in 1868. He was professed in 1890 and ordained on September 22nd, 1895. He was to live as a Passionist Priest for sixty-two years. He was a Preacher of Missions and Retreats and at home in the monastery he was active in confessional duty at Mount Argus. Fr. Eugene was the first Rector of St. Gabriel's Retreat, The Graan, Enniskillen 1909. Later he became Rector of Holy Cross Retreat. Ardoyne, Belfast.

On September 22nd, 1955, at St. Paul's Retreat, Mount Argus, Father Eugene celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of his ordination. On that glad occasion all realised that his long and accurate memory was a treasure-house of good things, old and new. He recalled the events and friendships of his early life, and spoke of the turbulent years of conflict in Ireland and of his close association with the national leaders of those days. His friends included the brothers Pearse and many other notable personalities of the Easter Week Rising, to which he gave his strong moral support.

Father Eugene passed to his reward on December 20th, 1957. He was 89 years of age.



Fr. Eugene Nevin C.P.