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An Introduction to Franciscan Questing in Twentieth Century Ireland

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Abstract: During the twentieth century, members of religious orders visited homes and farms on an annual basis seeking material support for their continued presence in a locality. Known to Franciscan friars as questing or simply the quest, it was essential for the existence of friaries across Ireland. Most friaries accommodated on average ten friars, and some such as the Novitiate in Killarney and the city friaries of Dublin and Cork had larger communities. Without an alternative income, questing for alms amongst the local population was a necessity for the friars but also met needs in the lives of the people. In practice, both parties gave and received according to their different roles and means and usually within the context of a shared faith. In times before modern or private transport, the customary visits of questors to rural homesteads forged an enduring bond between country people and town-based friaries evident in the testimonies of those who recall them. Nonetheless, questing seems to have fallen victim to the myriad of changes that prevailed in Ireland from the 1960s onwards, including improved standards of living, rising car ownership and a decline in religious vocations.

Keywords: quest, friar, tertiary, lay-brother.

Institutions and organisations need a source and means of support in order to function from day-to-day and to carry out the purpose for which they have been established. Commercial businesses require a local population who want to buy their products and services. A local catchment area is required for social amenities, schools, hospitals and parishes to function effectively. Entities such as parishes which depend upon local financial support are located so that they are accessible to potential users and supporters both present and future.

Support systems are also a necessity for the viability of religious houses such as convents, friaries and monasteries. Many male and female religious congregations have supported themselves through the provision of education and healthcare whilst monks and nuns in monasteries often lived off the produce of their own farms. Still other religious bodies such as the Augustinians, Dominicans

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and Franciscans, although they had churches to provide religious and spiritual services, lacked the supportive infrastructure of parishes and parish incomes. The mendicant orders had to develop other means of support for themselves and for their ministries. This article serves to introduce readers to one of these means, namely the quest, as practised by Franciscan friars and their associates during part of the twentieth century.

The quest was a customary seeking of alms by the friars from local businesses, householders and farmsteads. The extent of the area quested over time depended upon manpower, transport and the level of organisation of a particular quest. Franciscan questing is described here from the viewpoint of those who remember it; contributions include personal accounts from religious men who were familiar with the quest and also from people whose homes and farms were quested. The study has been made possible through the generosity of fifty-seven lay people, Franciscan friars, former friars and religious sisters (some of whom have since died) who responded to a request from the author for memories specifically of Franciscan questing. The information they provide spans a period of approximately sixty years from the 1930s to the 1990s when the quest eventually ended. Their recollections document for the most part, the final years of questing but outline very accurately what questing was and how it was perceived by people during that period. Respondents answered a set of questions or shared their knowledge and experience of the quest liberally. Transcripts were made for voice-recorded material. All the information has been fed into two databases, the Franciscan Quest database (FQ1) compiled from an original set of thirteen questions (with a fourteenth question added on for friar respondents only) and a second Franciscan Quest database (FQ2) compiled from a revised set of fourteen questions. In the databases, deposited in the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscan) Provincial Archive, respondents are identified by their names and initials, and in cases where respondents have provided more than one correspondence, their initials down the column are followed by the number 1, 2, 3, etc., to confer a chronological sequence on the date (or date and time in the case of more than one correspondence via email received in a single day) in which they were written. Thus in the text, the reference P.McL.2/FQ1:8 refers to information in Pius McLaughlin's second personal account stored in the Franciscan Quest database, FQ1 under question 8 (see respondents' initials along with their names in the Appendix. Quotes in the text are used strictly verbatim). A draft of the text of this article was read by a selection of friars who knew the quest or were learned in Irish Franciscan history; the current article has been informed by their responses and suggestions. Likewise, the maps showing the approximate extent of questing areas surrounding some friary towns have been informed by respondents who gave the names of places that were quested. The author takes full responsibility for any inaccuracies wherever they occur.

Traditionally, questing has been a means of support that distinguished mendicants who had no fixed income from monks who had landed wealth. It was a practice of begging for alms that endured in Ireland from medieval times (Ó

Clabaigh, 2012: 136-137), and a strong association between it and Franciscan friars is suggested in the early fourteenth century reference to questing in a satiric verse in *The Book of Kildare*: 'Hail, St. Francis, with thy many fowls ... many a bold beggar followed thy route [company]' (Cotter, 1994: 52). Members of many religious congregations have also quested for alms in the form of food, fuel and financial support from benefactors where alternative forms of income such as stipends and salaries have not been available to them. While the term 'quest' was widely used amongst religious, the people who were quested would almost certainly be unfamiliar with the term as respondent Mrs Rose McNeil, for instance, indicates when she says she '*Did not know it had a name*' (R.McN.2/FQ1:1).

References to questing in Ireland are rare and those that do occur are incidental such as instances of passing reference (Jennings, 2008: 84), conflict over questing rights and licences to quest certain areas (Conlan, 1987: 28; Ó Clabaigh, 2012: 136-137), and criticisms of the practice itself (Cotter, 1994, *op. cit.*: 53). Medieval documentary evidence suggests questing was a valued source of income for the friars (Ó Clabaigh, 2002: 119-120; Cotter, 1994, *op. cit.*: 52-54). Brief references to questing are also recorded in the various histories of the Franciscan houses in Ireland and in local studies (Conlan, 1989: 180-181; Ó Ríain, (pamphlet without date): 27, 37; Conlan, 1999: 105; Grannell, (pamphlet without date): 9, 12.). Franciscans Fr Walter Crowley OFM and Fr Fergal Grannell OFM refer to the quest as 'voluntary casual alms' (Crowley, 1978: 29) and 'a custom sanctioned by ecclesiastical privilege and immemorial use' but also as 'a somewhat indirect and rather seasonal source of income' (Grannell, 1978: 76), alluding perhaps to its precarious nature.

Quest records in Franciscan friaries around the country exist (P.C.2/FQ1:3) but these are not easily found, recorded as they are under headings other than 'quest' returns (W.C.1/FQ1:3). Occasionally, the name of a questor may have been noted in a friary chronicle such as that of 'Bro. Roger' in the chronicle entry for '1952, New Year' in the Franciscan Friary in Ennis, Co. Clare. However, the Irish Franciscan archive holds no such thing as a quest file, and the task of identifying and recording references to local quests in the different friary archives according to Franciscan librarian and scholar, Fr Ignatius Fennessy OFM, would demand considerable dedication (I.F.1/FQ1:13).

Nature of the Quest

Questing involved travelling around the countryside and sometimes the town in which a friary was located to seek alms. Fr Seamus Donohoe OFM recalls the good questing tips he received from dedicated questor Fr Alban Doherty OFM: '*One was: Never to pass anyone's door rich or poor, protestant or catholic. Knock or ring at every door. But then, never to knock at a door more than twice. Just to thank God if nobody came to the door and then keep moving, and of course never go back to a house if there was no reply*' (S.D.5/FQ2:3).

He continues by outlining the practicalities of a normal day on the quest: '*We*

always brought our own tea and sandwiches with us ... as we'd be out for most of the day, generally from about 10.30 am until about 7 pm. But it was important not to accept cups of tea in people's homes – as that could lead to problems! ... Then the most important thing was – always to be gracious and thankful even if they gave nothing or had nothing to give.'

Amongst the respondents' accounts recorded, one of the earliest quest dates was supplied by the late Fr Crowley who as an altar boy at the friary, Broad Lane in Cork city, witnessed a friar returning from the quest c. 1935. He recalled:

'... as we gathered for the devotions we watched Brother Gerard alighting from the pony and trap with a load of goods, vegetables, fruit and sometimes dead chickens. These trips would take place some three days a week during the summer days' (W.C.1/FQ1:1).

Judging by the range and quantity of goods he quested, it would seem that the practice had been carried on in that region for a considerable time already.

A number of respondents testify to the welcome visit of questing friars to rural and urban homesteads on an annual basis during the middle decades of the twentieth century. The late Mr Dónal Taheny remembered the quest from the Abbey in Galway: *'Well, it was the only time they saw a friar or that a friar entered their homes, and it was a bit of social entertainment.'* (D.T.2/FQ1:9). With memories of questing friars calling to her home in Co. Roscommon, Dorothy Whelan says: *'My Mum would have a meal for them and she would give them farm produce ...'* (D.W./FQ1:3) while John Cahir from Co. Clare says: *'They were always well received'* (J.C.1/FQ1:2), and Fr Liam McCarthy OFM says: *'People loved to see them coming'* (L.McC./FQ1:9).

While there may have been continuity in the practice of Franciscan questing through the centuries, changes occurred in the way that it was organised. In the nineteenth century, all Irish friars were ordained men and were known as Black friars because they wore the black clerical attire of the secular clergy, lived in presbyteries and generated income from mass stipends and collections (Conlan, 1988: 63; Conlan, 2009: 103-104). However, the emergence of a diocesan clergy during that century led to the friars leaving parish ministry and losing the financial support of their former parishes. Subsequently, these priest-friars quested, customarily standing at church doors on Sundays (P.C.1/FQ1:13).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, professed lay-brothers, the brown habit and prayer-in-common, were re-introduced into the Irish province (Conlan, 1988, *op. cit.*: 67, 72; Conlan, 2009, *op. cit.*: 118, 123-124). Lay-brothers had been part-and-parcel of the Irish Franciscans previously and Brother Mícheál Ó Cléirigh, chief compiler of *The Annals of the Four Masters* was one, but they were absent by the nineteenth century (Conlan, 1988, *op. cit.*: 72). Traditionally, the lay-brothers practised trades and carried out maintenance work, did domestic duties and quested (Conlan, 1988, *op. cit.*; O'Brien, 1954: 80; MacMahon, 2009: 88; Ó Clabaigh, 2012, *op. cit.*: 267-269). The late nineteenth century reformers' strict interpretation of the Rule of the Friars Minor which endured well into the second part of the twentieth century, forbade a professed friar (priest or lay-

brother) to handle money (O'Brien, *op. cit.*: 67-71; Trienekens, 1948: 158-159). Secular men or tertiaries (lay-brothers of the Order of Franciscan Seculars (Third Order)), on the other hand, could handle money (O'Brien, *op. cit.*: 69), and so in the early decades of the twentieth century, questing was done by perpetual tertiary brothers who also lived in the friaries (P.C.1/FQ1:13). Although unsure of his name, Mr Taheny recalled accompanying a Third Order brother '*... who did the quest out in Menlo and also in Claregalway. Br Francis didn't wear a capuche but did live in the Abbey.*' (D.T.1/FQ1:6; D.T.2/FQ1:5). While the tertiaries were permitted to receive money, professed friars did a quest-in-kind, for example, for butter in Co. Limerick (B.W.1/FQ1:5; P.McL.1/FQ1:7; W.C.1/FQ1:7), for meat in Athlone (M.H.1/FQ1:3; S.D.3/FQ2:3), or for vegetables, eggs and fowl in the countryside surrounding many friary towns (M.McI./FQ1:2; P.McC./FQ1:1; P.W.1/FQ1:3). By the 1950s, the questing friar was accompanied by a lay man, sometimes the driver, who would take donated money and bring it back to the friary for him (B.W.1/FQ1:1; T.O'L./FQ1:13; W.M./FQ2:1). Recalling the quest from Ennis, Ms Kathleen Bolger writes:

... the taxi men in the town would transport the Friar to his destination for free and would also act as Banker for the Friar as in those times a Friar was not allowed to handle money, so if the benefactor wanted to donate money he would hand it to the taxi man (K.B./F.Q1:13).

In the late 1960s, a relaxation in the exercise of the Rule meant that professed friars could begin accepting money (B.W.1/FQ1:1). In its final years, the quest was done by whatever priests or lay-brothers were willing and available (P.McL.1/FQ1:5).

Questing was both a means of support for the friars and a way in which personal and pastoral contact could be established with the people. The example of the Franciscan friary in Killarney, Co. Kerry may help to illustrate how a community of some forty or so men, professed friars and novices, was supported by the quest (H.G.2/FQ1:2). Fr Pius McLaughlin OFM explains:

'... the friars' main meal was really eggs. You had eggs for your breakfast, and eggs in the evening time except for the summer time when you might have a salad. You had a fry on a Thursday morning and on a Sunday morning so that all required eggs, so if you take there was, give or take, maybe say forty-plus friars in the community twice a day, I mean you're talking about eight dozen eggs, a lot of eggs' (P.McL.1/FQ1:2).

Right into the latter part of the twentieth century, questing friars from Killarney received large amounts of dairy and farm produce such as butter, eggs, and vegetables from Kerry people. In other locations, these goods along with additional quests of wool or turf were sought. Respondents recollect the frequency of visits being about once each year: '*It was done on a yearly basis*' (K.B./FQ1:3); '*the annual visit of the friars*' (L.McC./FQ1:2); '*Once a year I'd say ...*' (P.W.2/FQ1:3); '*... would visit our house in Drimnagh at least once a year*' (R.McN.1/FQ1:3). Local people like those in the vicinity of the friaries in Killarney, Athlone and Rosstown knew in advance of the questors' visit as Fr Pat Conlan OFM relates:

‘Once you began, the people knew you were coming, were ready to meet you ...’ (P.C.1/FQ1:5; also P.McL.1/FQ1:3; P.W.2/FQ1:2), and this ensured that householders were at home when the questor called.



Figure 1. Franciscan friaries from which questing took place in mid to late 20th century

A number of priests were singled out as being earnest questors, but at least half of all respondents remember lay-brothers for organising and doing the quest over the years (see the entries for FQ1:5). When needs arose, all friars quested, but during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, tertiaries and lay-brothers became associated with the quest perhaps because the former were often native to the local area whilst the latter tended to be stationed in one friary for long periods; for example, Brother John O'Regan OFM who quested from Merchants' Quay friary in Dublin for close to forty years (B.W.1/FQ1:5). Over time these questors built up a considerable knowledge of quest areas and forged close bonds with the people from whom they quested. They also built up a reputation as respondents testify: '*... Brother John was famous ...*' (P.McL.1/FQ1:3) and '*What I remember about Brother Basil is that he was known so well by everybody; everybody seemed to know Brother Basil*' (M.McI./FQ1:5).

Veteran questors such as Brother Gerald Fitzpatrick OFM in Killarney would always be on the look-out for a novice or young brother who showed special promise in this role (P.McL.1/FQ1:5). Not everybody enjoyed questing as it could feel awkward and embarrassing and was also physically exhausting, but Fr McLaughlin maintains that for those who were drawn to it, the quest was looked forward to each year: '*I think the friars that were involved in this would be, would have been looking forward to that every year ... It was it was their kind of, it was their thing*' (P.McL.1/FQ1:5, 10). For the late questor Brother Hugh Gallagher OFM, it offered a rewarding contact with the people and provided a necessary source of income and support for the friary: '*It was a means of support for the friars and it was a great contact with the people*' (H.G.2/FQ1:2, 10).

People were familiar with questing and friars' dependence on their generosity (P.G./FQ1:2; P.McL.1/FQ1:3). John Cahir originally from Corofin, Co. Clare relates it thus: '*Little was known about the Friars except that they were said to be very poor and had to rely on the generosity of the people for their daily food*' (J.C.1/FQ1:2). Although recognised as a form of begging, these friars recall people always receiving them hospitably: '*There was always a great welcome for us on the quest and we listened to the people's requests for prayers.*' (D.ÓR./FQ1:3) and '*... we ... got a great welcome from the people ...*' (H.G.2/FQ1:3). The Franciscan tunic was always worn whilst on the quest so that the questor was identifiable with the friary and accountable to the Franciscan community (B.W.1/FQ1:3; L.McC./FQ1:3). The general sense is that donations were given graciously to the questors, and sometimes when people missed the friar's visit, they might chase after him with their donation or call to the friary on another day as Fr McLaughlin explains:

'if they were out and they heard it in the neighbourhood then they come into the friary themselves ... and left in their eggs ... or left in anything they were going to give you. No, they, no, it wasn't just eggs ... you might get a side of cured ham ... or big big big juicy big litre bottles of fresh cream ...' (P.McL.1/FQ1:3).

Value of Quest for Friars and People

Franciscan questing was done at a time when friars lived off the charity and generosity of the people in return for spiritual services. Most friaries had no

reliable income such as they do nowadays with the common mass offering (known as the C.M.O., this became very popular since people could share in a mass or series of masses by giving a very small offering), spiritual enrolments, shrines, salaries (in a few cases), and pensions, so that questing was deemed a necessary means of survival for friaries across Ireland. Respondent Ms Bolger recognises the tremendous value of the quest for the day-to-day running of Ennis friary with most of its groceries coming from it either directly as ‘... *Questing gave the Friars food supplies ...*’ (K.B./FQ1:8) or indirectly by exchanging quested goods for cash or for other items in local shops:

‘Goods such as butter were accepted by the friars’ local grocer, who in turn gave the friars butter when they needed it, to the amount received from them. Also, some goods accepted on the quest could be exchanged for others in the shops’ (I.F.3/FQ1:8).



Figure 2. Approximate area quested from the Franciscan friary, Ennis, c. 1950s – 1960s.

Without such means, the weekly food bill alone would have cost the friary dearly and indeed, the late Brother Paschal Williamson lamented that without the quest: ‘*it costs a fortune now every week to buy stuff*’ (P.W.2/FQ1:8). The chronicle entry for June, 1948 at the friary in Ennis records that during the financial year, 1947-48, the local quest-in-cash amounted to £250.00 whilst a butter quest-in-cash amounted to £158.00. There was also a butter quest-in-kind that stood against certain other expenses. An added bonus for the friars was the visibility that

questing gave them by virtue of the fact that the Franciscan tunic was seen far and wide in public (P.McL.2/FQ1:8, 10). The visit of a questing friar to one's home also occasionally sowed the seeds of a Franciscan or priestly vocation (B.W.1/FQ1:1; C.K./FQ1:4; L.McC./FQ1:8).

The quest benefited people living beyond the friary town who seldom had the opportunity to visit the friary, access its spiritual services or make a request of a friar to visit their home or farm as Fr Fennessy explains: *'This was convenient for the people, who were often far away from any friary'* (I.F.3/FQ1:9). He continues that it also gave the friars an opportunity to exercise their spiritual functions out amongst the people:

'Questing brought friars in contact with people in the countryside, which was appreciated. It gave the people an opportunity to consult the friars about problems, to make requests for masses to be said, to have farms and animals blessed, to ask friars to visit sick relatives and friends, etc.' (I.F.1/FQ1:9).

The benefits not only kept the friars in provisions and served the people in a spiritual way, but also as Fr Crowley related, the quest sustained the friars spiritually too since it: *'brought us into contact with people of great faith and generosity all over the countryside'* (W.C.1/FQ1:8).

Many people believed that by giving a donation they were being included in the masses and prayers of the friars: *'They held the friars in high regard and felt rewarded for their donations in return for the prayers they offered'* (M.K./FQ1:9); *'... the generosity on both sides, yea and the dependence that there was on the prayer and the blessing from the friars'* (M.McI./FQ1:10). Referring to those who donated meat to the friary, Fr Donohoe adds: *'Of course they were also included in the Mass for our benefactors which was offered every Sunday'* (S.D.3/FQ2:10). Not only that, donors *'felt they were doing something good as well'* (P.G./FQ1:9) and *'The people regarded giving alms as a 'good work'* (S.W./FQ1:9). In places where belief in the *piseog* (a curse on land or individuals) was very strong, and where the friars were held in very high esteem, questors such as Killarney-based Brother Gerald were in great demand to visit farms themselves, to supply the farmers with blessed salt or ashes to sprinkle on their land, or friary water blessed at Easter, to bless their farms and livestock: *'There was great value at that time in holy water from the Friary for blessing crops and animals, etc.'* and *'Usually the Friars were able to exchange small samples of Easter Water, which people sprinkled to bring blessings on animals and crops'* (J.C.1/FQ1:9; J.C.2/FQ1:9; see other entries in FQ1:9; M.McI./FQ1:10). People depended heavily upon friars' services, prayers and blessings and showed their gratitude by donating something special like a joint of meat, a first-class fleece or a couple of chickens, even though they were often very poor themselves. Fr McLaughlin says: *'People also wanted to give you something in return and this was one way in which they showed their appreciation.'* (P.McL.2/FQ1:9). Rossnowlagh local and retired priest, Fr Manus Daly recalls that:

'Most people felt the Friars were a real gift to the area: people wanted to help in whatever way they could. My Father brought turf for fire. He also brought

potatoes and vegetables' (M.Dal./FQ2:7, 10).

Two respondents from Co. Clare remember the following:

'... the blessing from the friar was, meant a terrible lot ... and that's why very very poor people kept, we'll say a pair of chickens, geese at Christmas ... to bring to the friars even though they were poor themselves ... yea' (M.McI./FQ1:9),

and *'we would have a fleece of wool left aside for him'* (P.G./FQ1:2, 9).

Respondents testify to the friars' availability and willingness when requested to visit sick people, listen to a family difficulty or mediate in a dispute over land (L.B./FQ1:9; M.McI./FQ1:9). Now and again a situation arose when a questor offered material assistance from his quest to a needy family or householder:

'I remember one day I called to a 'farmhouse'. I could see immediately there was real poverty. I knew I had to think of something very fast so [as] not to embarrass the parents. They were there with the children which numbered five or six as I recall. I pretended that day was my birthday and had the children sing happy birthday for me. I hit the right note because one of the children told me it was their birthday two or three days later so I left what money I had collected that day with the child to have a birthday party with her brothers and sisters, knowing the parents would use the money more wisely. As far as I remember it was about £30' (L.B./FQ1:13).

'I remember a very poor old woman insisting on me taking three eggs which was all she had "as her 2 hens hadn't been laying well and maybe I'd say a prayer for them". When I told [Brother] Gerald about this he sent me back with a dozen eggs for her from the box we had in the pony and trap' (P.McL.2/FQ1:9).

According to one respondent, the people felt that whatever they gave to the friars, they would get back *'in the double or in return'* (M.McI./FQ1:9). Furthermore, people believed that the friars shared any food that was surplus to their own needs:

'... Questing gave the Friars food supplies not only for themselves, but they also distributed any surplus to the poor of the town, who would call to them on a regular basis' (K.B./FQ1:9),

and again: *'... each evening they donated any food left over to the poor of Ennis who called to their door ...'* (J.C.1/FQ1:2). For the people, according to Ms Úna Cleary, giving something to the friars, *'made them feel good'* (Ú.C./FQ1:9).

In an early expression of practical ecumenism, Protestant families were visited sometimes, for example, in Athlone and Rosstown, and some of these sent a contribution-in-cash to the friars at Christmas time. Fr Liam McCarthy OFM remembers: *'In the quest from Rosstown Protestant farmers also wished to see the friar calling'* (L.McC./FQ1:9), and Fr Conlan mentions: *'... Protestant houses that would love you to call. I was well received in many non-Catholic places'* (P.C.1/FQ1:5), while Br Williamson proudly spoke of *'two non-Catholics ... they would send me money for the quest at Christmas'* (P.W.2/FQ1:2). It is likely, therefore, that various people for many different reasons got some benefit from Franciscan questing.

Different Types of Quest

The friars quested for different goods depending on their needs and on the produce of the areas in which they were questing. The questing season began each year at Eastertide or around April and could last until late September or early October (B.W.1/FQ1:6; P.McL1/FQ1:3). Some necessities such as eggs, home-made butter, meat and general country produce could be quested throughout that time but other goods such as wool and turf demanded planning for particular dates. The friars quested for wool where sheep farming was prevalent, for example, in the countryside around Athlone, Ennis, and Galway, and sheep farmers expecting the questors in June or July, put aside a prime fleece for them: *'I remember that a good fleece of wool was left aside for him'* (J.C.1/FQ1:3); and *'... the best fleece of wool was kept for the friars'* (M.McL./FQ1:2). Mr Pat Galvin remembers the questor visiting his parents' farm in the townland of Ross, Ruan, Co. Clare:

'... a brother eh used to come here every year eh in a taxi, and em eh we would have, in those days we kept sheep and we would be expecting him, and eh we would have a fleece of wool left aside for him' (P.G./FQ1:2).

In areas where peat was used as a fuel, the turf quest took place when the turf was ready to be harvested, for example, around Athlone and Rosstownlagh. Brother Williamson related how he quested turf:

'I used to go up the mountains ... for turf ... and ... I would collect the turf from the different areas, different houses and they'd leave the turf out at the side of the road and then I would get the tractors then, to bring the turf down' (P.W.2/FQ1:1, 2).

The creameries were also quested by the friars around the same time each year, over a whole month around May or June each year from Killarney (B.W.1/FQ1:3; P.McL.1/FQ1:3) and in the autumn from Clonmel (S.D.4/FQ2:3).

There was also a distinction between town quests and country quests, the former generally taking place in friary towns. The town quest was often a quest for meat, but Killarney questors visited businesses in neighbouring towns seeking tea, sugar, canned goods, and toiletries. Mr Joe McDermott, a former Franciscan student recalls:

'There was also a quest we did once a year in the town of Tralee. We use to hire a van. Bro Gerald took me with him on this quest and it was very interesting. It was shops of every kind we quested from' (J.McD.1/FQ1:7; also B.W.1/FQ1:3; P.McL.1/FQ1:3).

On the other hand, country quests stretched far out into the hinterlands of the towns, and quests from the friaries in Wexford and Killarney extended throughout the dioceses of Ferns and Kerry respectively (B.McG./FQ1:6; I.F.2/FQ1:7; P.McL.1/FQ1:7; W.C.1/FQ1:7).

In friary towns such as Athlone, Carrick-on-Suir, Drogheda, Ennis, Galway, Limerick and Wexford, respondents speak about a local meat quest: *'The Abbey Friars only quested the butchers'* (B.McG./FQ1:4); *'The Final Place I quested was in Wexford First in the Town for Meat & groceries in 1975 to say 1980 ...'* (B.W.1/FQ1:6; see also other entries for FQ1:3); and *'... in Athlone, in addition to*

the country quest ... there was the meat quest in the town itself ... (S.D.3/FQ2:3). Donors purchased meat for the friars from local butchers occasionally or on a more regular basis. Speaking about the meat quest in Athlone, Fr Conlan explains: *'the cook had a list and rang up the families once a year who gave it directly or more usually through a butcher'* (P.C.2/FQ1:3).

Fr McLaughlin describes what happened in Drogheda:

'Ah, there was a meat quest and ... different butchers and different people would say "I'll get the meat on Thursday for the friars" ... and they they would ring up the butcher and say "whatever the friars want today I'll pay for it," ... and there were three, like they did that in Drogheda ... the friary in Drogheda there were three or four butchers there and the different people, St Anthony's clients and all the rest, they went to the butcher and say, you know ... "I'll I'll do the meat for the month of March eh every Thursday for four weeks"' (P.McL.1/FQ1:3).

Whilst many country quests sought particulars such as wool, turf or eggs, many others sought various food produce such as vegetables and fowl. These quests for food involved questors from most of the friaries including Athlone, Carrick-on-Suir, Cork, Ennis and Rosstown. A respondent from County Clare provides the following:

'... at home in my own home, we ... often gave potatoes, sacks of potatoes. My mother would have a pair of chickens every year for them. Eggs every time ... they were given to the friary' (M.McI./FQ1:2).

Fr Donohoe explains:

'Many people would give potatoes or vegetables such as carrots and parsnips and onions, or they'd give eggs. They'd give all sorts of things that would be useful to the friars – as the friars could not receive coin or money. Many people would give live chickens or hens that the friars would either have to kill themselves or make some arrangement with the butcher who would have them killed and give the friars credit in place of them' (S.D.3/FQ2:7).

Contributing-in-kind as one respondent notes was the norm into the 1960s:

'It may sound quaint now but giving in kind was not just confined to the Church. It applied to doctors and Landlords as well, money not being readily available then' (B.McG./FQ1:10).

Referring to the 1950s, another respondent points out that *'The better off were the farmers in those times'* and *'the only people who were totally self-sufficient then were farmers as they had their own farm produce'* (K.B./FQ1:9, 13). Householders may customarily have given money when they had no farm produce to offer as Ennis respondent, Mrs. Nellie Gill explains, *'... he [the questor] could get money if they hadn't much like to give otherwise.'* (E.F.G./FQ1:2) and *'... some people who'd, maybe hadn't anything to give, gave money ...'* (M.McI./FQ1:2) but from the 1960s onward, people, as a rule, tended to donate money instead of food, for example, on the Carrick-on-Suir, Drogheda, and Ennis quests. Brother Bonaventure Ward OFM relates, *'... in 1971 when I was stationed in Carrick-on-Suir ... the quest around the Country there ... was mainly for money, though food was also accepted'* (B.W.1/FQ1:6). The egg quest was a country quest from

friaries such as Killarney and Galway (B.W.1/FQ1:3, 6; D.T.1/FQ1:3; P.McL.1/FQ1:2, 3), and as the name indicates, the friars quested for donations of eggs.

Farmers traditionally brought their milk to be sold at the local creamery. There were many small creameries throughout the Irish countryside in the middle decades of the twentieth century, each serving an average radius of five to eight miles (eight to thirteen kilometers) (Cronin, 2005: 169, 173). A 1961 Creamery List in Ennis Friary shows that the west Clare region had a central creamery and fifteen branch creameries which were quested. The butter quest also known as the creamery quest was literally a quest for butter at these local creameries, and usually took the form of a quest-in-cash. Arriving at the creamery, the questing friar stood beside the creamery manager as he weighed and recorded the measure of milk delivered by each farmer. The hope was that the latter would give the creamery manager permission to put so many pounds of butter – which would be converted into a cash value – into the friary account. A former creamery manager recalls:

‘I can remember the farmers coming up saying put me down for 1lb or 2lbs as the case may be – then when the milk was ALL in we added up the LBS & Butter donated and gave a cheque to the value – the Friars always travelled in pairs’ (L.C.2/FQ2:3).

Fr Crowley described questing at the creamery:

‘... required standing around the main entrance to the creamery meeting the busy farmer having a short chat and often just a quick – “Morning Father, sure same again” and he would fix it up with the local creamery manager’ (W.C.1/FQ1:2).

Two or three pounds (approx. 1 kg) were the usual contributions in the 1960s and early 1970s (D.ÓR./FQ1:3; E.B.2/FQ1:1). This was a quest-in-cash as opposed to a quest-in-kind whereby the butter (or other produce) itself was donated, and both types were quested from the friary in Ennis according to the chronicle entry for June, 1948. Creameries were an opportunity for farmers to engage in social conversation with one another (Cronin, *op. cit.*: 175), and likewise, the questor was expected to engage in chat with the farmers as well as quest for the donation: *‘the whole thing was you were to engage with the people’* (P.McL.1/FQ1:3).

The creamery quest became an important source of friary income, and its carefully managed operation is evident in the creamery lists that were kept in the friaries. In 1961, the friars from Ennis were questing creameries in north, east and west County Clare as well as some in County Tipperary, likely all within the Diocese of Killaloe (see Creamery List *op. cit.*). The friars from Killarney visited all the small creameries operating within the Diocese of Kerry (P.McL.1/FQ1:3). Questors from Limerick, Carrick-on-Suir and Clonmel friaries also quested at the creameries.

Questing Rights

Franciscan questing areas were determined by parish and diocese rather than by county, as Fr Conlan explains: *‘The questing areas were laid down by tradition,*

generally within the diocese where the friary was.’ Br Ward concurs with him but adds that the Clonmel quest sometimes ‘...went into the Diocese of Cloyne & maybe Ossory which were really outside our right ...’ (B.W.1/FQ1:7; B.W.2/FQ1:7). Questing from Wexford friary, Fr Fennessy recalls being driven ‘... around the diocese of Ferns’ (I.F.2/FQ1:7).

Questing within the local diocese was the case in medieval times also when questing rights extended over the area in which the friars had licence to preach and hear confessions (Ó Clabaigh, 2012 *op. cit.*: 136). Assistant questor Fr McLaughlin understood that once a bishop had granted the right to a religious body to quest within his diocese, the custom was that the said body could quest anywhere in that diocese *in perpetuum* unless specifically repealed by the local bishop (P.McL.1/FQ1:7). Furthermore, he believed that it was not within the remit of local religious entities to exclude other religious questors from their locality or questing area. So, for example, Franciscan friars quested in Tralee, Co. Kerry where the Dominicans were located and occasionally, in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, home to Augustinian friars (P.McL.1/FQ1:7; P.C.1/FQ1:7). Questing from the friary in Clonmel, Brother Nicholas Shanahan OFM relates how he respected the Augustinian areas of Dungarvan and Fethard: ‘*Augustinians in Dungarvan. I went in near it about a mile. Augustinians in Fethard. I stopped about a mile outside*’ (N.S.2/FQ1:7). Sometimes the friars questing from Wexford friary crossed the tracks of a similarly questing Augustinian friar from New Ross, Co. Wexford: ‘*Sometimes we crossed the tracks of an Augustinian from New Ross on the Quest like ourselves*’ (I.F.2/FQ1:3; also, I.F.3/FQ1:3; I.F.4/FQ1:13).

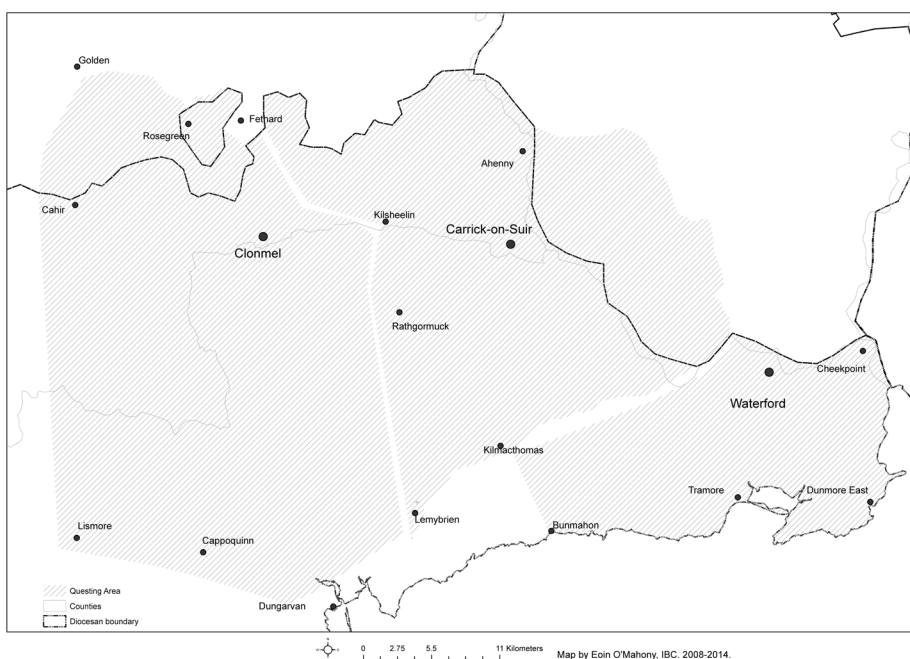


Figure 3. Approximate areas of the three Franciscan quests in the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore: Clonmel, 1970s; Carrick-on-Suir, 1970s; and Waterford, 1960s.

Each friary had its own questing rights and friars did not like their questing areas to be encroached even by neighbouring Franciscan friars as might have happened in the case of questors from Waterford, Carrick-on-Suir (the friary was in Carrickbeg south of the River Suir) and Clonmel, whose friaries all lay within the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore (P.C.1/FQ1:7; P.C.3/FQ1:7; W.C.1/FQ1:7). Fr Diarmaid Ó Riain OFM, questing from Waterford recalls: *‘being careful not to quest in the area allotted to the Carrick friars’* (D.ÓR./FQ1:7).

In order to avoid conflict, the questing boundaries in the region must have been negotiated and agreed upon at some earlier point by friars from each of these houses. Usually the boundary between two friaries lay about halfway between them as, for example, the village of Kilsheelan in County Tipperary which marked the boundary between the questing areas of Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir friaries (Jennings, 2008: 40; B.W.2/FQ1:7), and Fr Conlan tells how seasoned questors like Br Tarcisius (alias Robert) Molloy OFM in Clonmel knew the boundaries to the last house (P.C.1/FQ1:7).

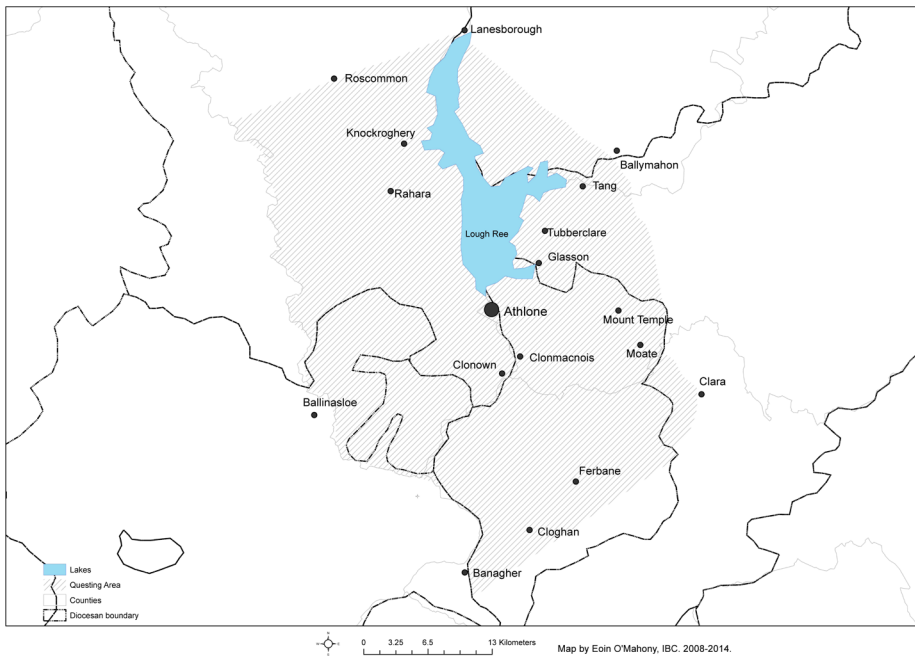


Figure 4. Approximate area of questing from the Franciscan friary, Athlone, 1970s

Exceptions to the general rule existed, however, since although Athlone friary is in the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois, part of the town west of the River Shannon is in the Diocese of Elphin, the town's northern hinterland is in the Diocese of Meath and a portion of the Archdiocese of Tuam lies a few kilometres to the south west. This meant that while the Athlone friars were questing the rural areas surrounding the town, they crossed into each of these dioceses to do

so (P.C.1/FQ1:7). Meanwhile, Galway questors ‘trespassed’ the Archdiocese of Tuam, having, they claim, been invited by local people (L.B./FQ1:6; M.ÓH.1/FQ1:7). Respondents recall no opposition from other religious communities such as the Dominicans in Tralee or the Augustinians in Dungarvan, but one friar relates how his request for permission to continue questing in a neighbouring diocese was declined by its bishop (P.O’G./FQ1:3). In order to ease their task, questors from Athlone, Carrick-on-Suir, Clonmel, Galway and Killarney kept notebooks listing the names of the areas, routes and people to be quested marked in them (P.C.1/FQ1:5; N.S.1/FQ1:3). Recalling the Athlone quest, Fr Michael Holland OFM says:

‘Fr Alban Docherty was responsible for the quest west of the Shannon in my time and he had a very detailed notebook made out of all the areas he visited, the roads, the house and the names of the people’ (M.H.1/FQ1:5).

The quest had to be organised each year, and Galway questor, Brother Larry Brady OFM described how he planned his quest like a fan spreading from the city moving along four main arterial routes, and visiting all the areas in-between (L.B./FQ1:6).

Notable Questors

Once the questing season began, the job was a full-time one. Alluding to Merchants’ Quay friary in Dublin, Brother Ward recalls: ‘... *there were 3 full-time questors ...*’ (B.W.1/FQ1:3), and Brother Philip Lane OFM agrees: ‘*This was a full-time job*’ (P.La.1/FQ1:5). Certain questors are especially remembered by friars and people for their dedication to the task. Memories of questing in Cork city stretch back to c.1930 when Fr Crispin Keating OFM, then a small child, remembers the questing friar, Br Gerard, sitting in the kitchen at home speaking to his mother (C.K./FQ1:4). It was while out questing near Crookstown in West Cork nearly thirty kilometres from the friary in Cork city that Br Gerard died suddenly in 1943 (B.W.1/FQ1:5; C.K./FQ1:7; W.C.1/FQ1:5). Br Gerard quested at shops in Cork city also, and Mrs Mary McNamee recalls happy memories of him questing monthly at her family’s dairy and grocery shop: ‘... *He had a large leather bag (a Gladstone I think) and after a while my mother put butter, tea, sugar, etc. from the shop shelves into the bag*’ (M.McN.1/FQ1:4).

The most celebrated questor amongst the friars was perhaps Br Gerald Fitzpatrick OFM whom they affectionately called ‘the chief’ because he organised and spearheaded the quest from Killarney for many years (H.G.2/FQ1:5). The questing of Br Gerald and his co-workers kept the large friary community, then the Novitiate house of the Irish Franciscans, in food and other daily supplies for much of the year as Br Gallagher recalled: ‘*At that time there could have been 30 members in the community and they were completely supported from the quest*’ (H.G.2/FQ1:2). Br Gerald had developed his quest into an apostolate and ‘*these people were waiting for him to come*’ according to Fr McLaughlin (P.McL.1/FQ1:9). On those visits, he brought blessed water and Lenten ashes from the friary to the people, and they confided their troubles in him (J.McD.1/FQ1:9; P.La.1/

FQ1:2). Many of the young lay-brothers stationed in Killarney over the years, accompanied him, and relate with enthusiasm the influence and many happy memories they have from questing with this devout and hardworking Franciscan friar (B.W.1/FQ1:15; J.McD./FQ1:8; P.McL.1/FQ1:3).

Fr Alban (alias Michael) Doherty OFM, mentioned above, was one of a number of priests whom friars remember as a keen questor from the friaries at Athlone and Carrick-on-Suir (see some of the entries for FQ1:5; also S.D.5/FQ2:3, 5). Many others, lay-brothers and priests, are remembered as questors for particular friaries but space is too limited to list them all here.

Quest Transport

In the earlier years, questing was undertaken using pony-and-trap, local drivers and hackneys as Fr Fennessy recalls: *'Some used horse and trap, as in Killarney. Others used hired cars, in the days before friars had their own'* (I.F.1/FQ1:3). During the 1930s, Br Gerard of Cork friary was questing the city's hinterland using pony-and-trap (W.C.1/FQ1:1, FQ1:2). Br Gerald's egg quest from Killarney was done by pony-and-trap, and his last pony, whose name was Dolly, is fondly remembered by those who quested Kerry in this way (J.McD.1/FQ1:3; P.La.1/FQ1:3; P.McL.1/FQ1:3) or who remember those questors on their trips (T.L.1/FQ2:3).

The distance questors were prepared to travel was considerable. In medieval England, questors could travel nearly fifty kilometres from home so that they either stayed in small bases specially constructed for this purpose or with friends and benefactors who offered them hospitality (Ó Clabaigh, 2012 *op. cit.*: 135). Fr Holland remembers: *'hearing stories of the questor having to stay overnight with some family rather than going home and coming back again the next day'* (M.H.1/FQ1:3). Indeed, Sr Pius McCarthy relates how, in the 1950s, questors were staying overnight in a house in Doonbeg, which is more than sixty kilometres south-west of the friary in Ennis:

'They travelled by train from Ennis Station to Doonbeg Station (The West Clare Railway). Two Friars usually came; – Br Ambrose and Br Roger O'Sullivan (a Kerryman). They stayed in Mrs Hanrahan's house in Doonbeg & later in Rita Hanrahan's' (P.McC./FQ1:3).

However, the daily radius travelled by the Killarney egg questors on pony-and-trap averaged just three to four miles (c.6 km) or up to five miles (8 km) on a good day in summer (P.McL.1/FQ1:7). As soon as the greater merits of motor transport were recognised, not least the possibility of covering much larger areas in a fraction of the time and without the need to rush (P.McL.1/FQ1:3), questors began to use vans and cars, initially on loan, from the 1960s onwards. Questing from Killarney, Br Ward recalls:

'I remember on Feast of St Anthony 1961 going to Randles Garage with Pius McLaughlin to pick up a van which the friars were getting a loan of for the Creamery Quest' (B.W.1/FQ1:13).

Fr Florian Farrelly OFM recalls the situation in Drogheda in the 1960s when

the questor ‘... *had the loan of a car courtesy of spiritual friends*’ (F.F.1/FQ1:5). Quests that were farther afield such as the creamery quest and quests of other towns were done by motor transport also, and Fr Donohoe refers to the Clonmel quest where a ‘*Fr Eustace had a Mini Minor and he’d drive myself and [Fr] Oscar out to the creameries – Oscar to one and me to another*’ (S.D.4/FQ2:3). Both the creamery and town quests from Killarney were by car driven by a local driver and later by friars themselves (B.W.1/FQ1:6, FQ1:13; P.McL.1/FQ1:3). The use of cars was changing the quest itself since people had to be discouraged from donating wool that would destroy the taxi’s upholstery, and the limited capacity of the car made it impractical to quest for sacks of potatoes, vegetables and live fowl, so that people were encouraged to give monetary contributions instead (S.D.3/FQ2:3).

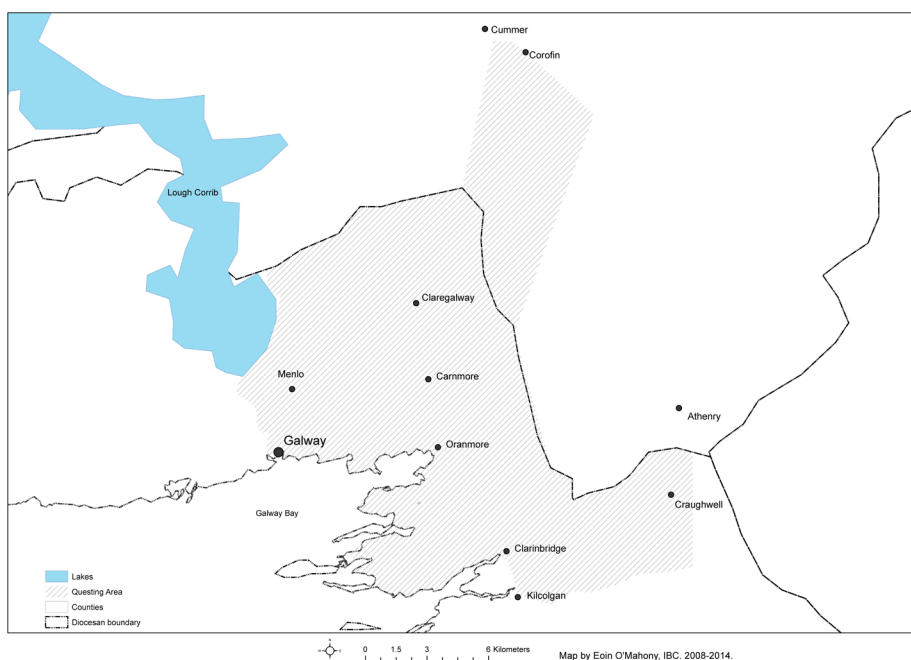


Figure 5. Approximate area of the Franciscan quest from The Abbey, Galway, late 1960s – early 1970s.

Local drivers or hackneys were also used by questors from the friaries in Carrick-on-Suir, Clonmel, Ennis, Galway, Waterford and Wexford. Speaking about the quest from Wexford friary, Brother Ward says: ‘... *friars went on the County Quest around the County driven by a hired man named Chris Hopkins*’ (B.W.4/FQ1:3). Mrs Gill from Ennis recalls: ‘... *I remember the hackney car going down to the hall door, to collect them ...*’ (E.F.G./FQ1:1). Fr Holland says: ‘*Before the friars had their own cars a man was hired to drive the friar around ...*’ (M.H.1/FQ1:3).

Local Protestant benefactors lent tractors to tertiary, Br Williamson in Rosstown, so that he could collect bags of turf requested from people in the uplands of counties Donegal and Fermanagh across the border (P.W.2/FQ1:2). The extent of the area requested by the Ennis friars was greatly helped by the West Clare Railway which penetrated into the far reaches of the county well into mid-century. Sr McCarthy formerly of Doonbeg, Co. Clare writes,

'... Franko McInerney used drive the Friars in his pony & trap when they came to the Doonbeg area questing. They travelled by train from Ennis Station to Doonbeg Station (The West Clare Railway)' (P.McC./FQ1:3).

Demise of the Quest

It seems likely that Franciscan questing in Ireland ceased due to a combination of factors. Some respondents link its redundancy to the introduction of the Common Mass Offering (CMO). A number of new sources of financial income, of which the CMO was one, presented friaries with a more reliable and year-round cash income, which had advantages over seasonal incomes-in-kind from questing. Brother Ward reflects: *'I suppose it's fair to say that the Quest just faded out gradually after the Introduction of the C.M.O. which was on 1st March 1980 if my memory is accurate'* (B.W.1/FQ1:11). Fr Eugene Barrett OFM seems to concur saying that the quest: *'... was a major means of income up to the bringing in of the common Mass offering which was fairly recent (1970s I think)'* (E.B.1/FQ1:11). While it may be true that, as Fr McCarthy puts it: *'The CMO took away the need from the support point of view – but also took away that precious contact'* (L.McC./FQ1:12), it is not necessarily the case that the CMO was alone in doing this.

Still, the reality may be far more complex since many factors were at play during those final years of questing. A number of respondents point to the increasing affluence in society generally as a contribution to its decline: *'Money was more readily available and mass shrines more in demand.'* (B.McG./FQ1:12);

'... there was more affluence around ...' (J.C.1/FQ1:12); *'The standard of living improved and more money was being given in mass Donations'* (K.B./FQ1:12). With greater availability of cash and more disposable income, respondents note that people began to give money instead of the customary farm produce: *'But for a finish, also before they finished the questing, the main thing we gave them was money ... the food and the produce stopped a good deal ...'* (M.McI./FQ1:11).

Certain forms of quest ceased simply due to modernisation such as the Rosstown turf quest which ended once the friary was connected to the electricity grid in the 1950s. Br Williamson explained: *'This stopped when [Fr] Camillus got the ESB to wire us up'* (P.W.1/FQ1:11). Simultaneously, the fortunes of the friars were changing at this time too, and no sooner than the friars had alternative incomes such as the CMO, shrines, and parishes, and were beginning to own cars in the 1960s, that some felt that it was no longer reasonable to be questing from people who themselves were often struggling to make ends meet. Fr Maelísa Ó Huallacháin OFM recalls: *'Once we got the parish ... [the guardian and PP said]*

we did not need the money' (M.ÓH.1/FQ1:12), whereas Br Williamson maintained: *'... it continued until eh whatever guardian was here ... thought it was too hard on the people ...'* (P.W.2/FQ1:12) and Fr Donohoe recalls: *'At that time a number of friars were very critical of us going around with our hands out for money'* (S.D.4/FQ2:13). Indeed, Br Ward, a former questor, recalls his superior asking him not to quest anymore arguing: *'That we were getting enough money in for our needs & so according to the Rule we shouldn't need to Quest'* (B.W.4/FQ1:12). Fr Brendan McGrath OFM says simply: *'It served its purpose and had run its course'* (B.McG/FQ1:12) whilst a lay respondent makes the comment that it *'seemed ... somewhat outdated in modern times'* (L.I/FQ2:11). Friars who supported the practice lament that other friars had come to see it as merely a money-gathering exercise, and regret that they were either unaware or chose to ignore its pastoral role (P.C.1/FQ1:12). They contend that it provided excellent contact with people and facilitated the making of a special connection and closeness to ordinary people in particular. Br Gallagher said: *'I think it was excellent, it was excellent contact with the people'* (H.G.2/FQ1:10). Fr Holland alludes to the relationship that was formed between questors and those quested: *'I also think that they [the people] felt a special bond with the friars because of the quest'* (M.H.1/FQ1:9). Fr McGrath contends that *'Apart from it being a material necessity, it also brought the Order close to the ordinary people'* (B.McG./FQ1:8) while Fr Donohoe says: *'I think that doing the quest was a very good way of keeping in touch with the country people and making them aware of our presence in the town ...'* (S.D.3/FQ2:11). Supporters of questing argued that a form of 'quest' where nothing was asked of the people would have been a way of keeping in contact with them, and in fact, this became the practice for a brief time in Athlone and Rossnowlagh (F.F.3/FQ1:3; M.H.1/FQ1:2).

Among the reasons for its demise, the depletion in the number of questing friars available through old age, death and dwindling vocations is incontestable. Fr Conlan says: *'in my view the decline in the quest was directly related to shortage of friars'* (P.C.2/FQ1:12) and Br Lane says: *'Again this stopped when the Brothers got old'* (P.La.1/FQ1:12). Tertiary brothers, as such, did not exist anymore (Br Williamson was the last), and lay-brothers in the Order were in decline. With fewer men at hand, it was deemed impossible to spare a friar for five days a week over the summer months (P.C.1/FQ1:12). By-and-large then, questing from most friaries ended around 1980, with a few exceptions continuing on a much reduced scale into the 1990s, for example in Wexford (B.W.1/FQ1:11; B.W.4/FQ1:13). Br Williamson believed that with the end of questing, an opportunity for visiting people was lost so that in a very short time, there was little or no contact between the friars and people beyond the friary itself, saying emphatically: *'Contact? There's no contact now!'* (P.W.2/FQ1:10).

Conclusion

Down to the latter part of the twentieth century, Franciscans, particularly lay-brothers, like many of their religious counterparts, travelled around local towns,

countryside and creameries questing food, wool, fuel and money to support their life and ministry in locations across Ireland. Within traditional questing areas, local friaries normally quested a place annually. The benefits were mutual as the annual visit to people's homes was expected and welcomed, and people showed their appreciation to the friars by contributing-in-kind for the spiritual services provided. Questing succeeded in providing friaries with weekly supplies but more than that, it facilitated a close and enduring bond between friars and people accruing from the generosity and hospitality of each party in responding to the needs of the other.

Questing continued while questors were readily available, but as the older questors died out and vocations to the religious life declined, friaries were hard-pushed to find replacement questors whilst also maintaining church services. Meanwhile, other forms of income were being identified and developed by the friars, facilitated by a growing affluence and availability of money in society. The changes in religious practice that arose from the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s may also have contributed in some way to the eventual decision of the friars to give up questing. More in-depth study is required before firm conclusions can be drawn as to why it ended. Interestingly, respondents report little on negative aspects of questing, and yet this dimension would need to be probed in order to get a more complete picture of the phenomenon. By all accounts received from people who recall witnessing it first-hand, it was popular amongst the people, and even non-Catholics supported it.

Many aspects, indeed, remain untouched and as many questions remain unanswered here. It would be interesting to map religious questing in general throughout the country and examine the ways in which it has influenced the religious observance of the people and their attitude towards Church and religion. It would be interesting also to examine how the relationship between religious orders and the people changed since questing ended.

In spite of its success in supporting local religious houses for decades and its popularity amongst generations of people, the quest ended quietly and without ceremony. It might well be true that the quest '*had run its course*' and was '*outdated in modern times*' but it might equally be claimed that in giving up this age-old practice, the Franciscans lost a tried and tested way of engaging with people outside the purely religious sphere where they were able to forge relationships benefiting both parties far and wide for generations.

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Appendix: Key to database references in text

B.McG. – Fr Brendan McGrath OFM
B.W. – Br Bonaventure (Boney) Ward OFM
C.K. – Fr Crispin Keating OFM
D.ÓR. – Fr Diarmaid Ó Riain OFM
D.T. – Mr Dónal Taheny
D.W. – Mrs Dorothy Whelan
E.B. – Fr Eugene Barrett OFM
E.F.G. – Mrs Ellen Frances (Nellie) Gill
F.F. – Fr Florian Farrelly OFM
H.G. – Br Hugh Gallagher OFM
I.F. – Fr Ignatius Fennessy OFM
J.C. – Mr John Cahir
J.McD. – Mr Joe McDermott
K.B. – Ms Kathleen Bolger
L.B. – Br Laurence (Larry) Brady OFM
L.C. – Mr Liam Chute
L.I. – Mr Liam Irwin
L.McC. – Fr Liam McCarthy OFM
M.Dal. – Fr Manus Daly
M.H. – Fr Michael Holland OFM
M.K. – Mrs Mary Kearns
M.McI. – name with author
M.McN. – Mrs Mary Namee
M.ÓH – An tAth. Maelísa Ó Hualacháin OFM
N.S. – Br Nicholas Shanahan OFM
P.C. – Fr Pat Conlan OFM
P.G. – Mr Pat Galvin
P.La. – Br Philip Lane OFM
P.McC. – Sr Pius McCarthy
P.McL. – Fr Pius McLaughlin OFM
P.O’G – Fr Peter O’Grady OFM
P.W. – Br Paschal Williamson, Franciscan tertiary
R.McN. – Mrs Rose McNeill
S.D. – Fr Séamus Donohoe OFM
S.W. – Mr Séan White
T.O’L. – Mr Tony O’Loughlin
T.ÓL. – An tAth. Tomás B. Ó Luanaigh (alias, T.L. – Fr Tom Looney)
Ú.C – Ms Úna Cleary
W.C. – Fr Walter Crowley OFM
W.M. – Mr Walter Myles