

The Official Testimonies of the Fifteen
Witnesses to the Knock Apparition on
21 August 1879

BYRNE, DOMINICK (Junior)

“I am brother of Mary Byrne, who has given evidence already; I live near the chapel of Knock. My age is twenty years.

On the occasion when my sister came about eight o'clock on the evening of the 21st August into our house, she exclaimed: ‘Come Dominick, and see the image of the Blessed Virgin, as she had appeared to us down at the chapel.’ I said: ‘What image?’ and then she told me, as she has already described it for your Reverence in her testimony; she told me all she was after seeing.

I then went with her, and by this time some ten or twelve people had been collected around the place, namely, around the ditch or wall fronting the gable, where the vision had been seen, and to the south of the schoolhouse.

Then I beheld the three likenesses or figures that have been already described, The Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and St. John, as my sister called the bishop, who was like one preaching, with his hand raised towards the shoulder, and the forefinger and middle finger pointedly set, the other two fingers compressed by the thumb; in his left hand he held a book; he was so turned that he looked half towards the altar and half towards the people. The eyes of the images could be seen; they were like figures, inasmuch as they did not speak.

I was filled with wonder at the sight I saw; I was so affected that I shed tears. I continued looking on for fully an hour, and then I went away to visit Mrs. Campbell, who was in a dying state. When we returned the vision had disappeared.

BYRNE, DOMINICK (Senior)

“I live at Knock, I remember the night of the 21st of August, my cousin Dominick Byrne, came to see us at about eight o'clock p.m., and called me to see the vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary and other saints at the south gable of the chapel.

I went with him. When I reached the south side of the chapel we saw the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, having her hands uplifted, and her eyes turned up towards heaven, as if in prayer, and she was dressed in a white cloak.

To her right I saw St. Joseph, and on her left St. John, just as the other persons had told me before I came.

I saw an altar there, and figures representing saints and angels traced or carved on the lower part of it. The night was dark and raining, and yet these images, in the dark night, appeared with bright lights as plain as under the noonday sun.

At the time it was pitch dark and raining heavenly, and yet there was not one drop of rain near the near the images.

There was a mitre on St. John's head, nearly like that which a bishop wears. I was there for only one quarter of an hour. At the time I was there, five others persons were in it with me, looking at it with me, looking on at the Apparition. All the figures appeared clothed in white. The whiskers on St. Joseph were an iron grey. The Blessed Virgin had on a white cloak.

The reason I had for calling the third figure St. John is because some saw his statue or his likeness at Lecanvey parish chapel.

BYRNE, MARGRET

"I, Margaret Byrne, live near Knock chapel. I am a sister to Mary Byrne, who has seen the vision. I remember the night of the 21st of August, I left my own house at half past seven o'clock, and we went to the chapel and locked it, I came out to return home, I saw something luminous or bright at the south gable, but it never entered my head that it was necessary to see or enquire what it was, I passed by and went home.

Shortly after, about eight o'clock, my niece, Catherine Murray, called me out to see the Blessed Virgin and the other saints that were standing at the south gable of the chapel.

I went out then, and ran up to see what was to be seen. I there beheld the Blessed Virgin with a bright crown on her head, and St Joseph to her right, his head inclined a little towards Our Blessed Lady, and St. John the Evangelist to her left, eastwards, holding in his left hand a book of the gospels, and his right hand raised the while, as if in the attitude of preaching to the people who stood before him at the ditch.

The Virgin appeared with hands uplifted as if in prayer, with eyes turned towards heaven, and wearing a lustrous crown. I saw an altar there. It was surrounded with a bright light, nay, with a light at times sparkling, and, so, too, were the other figures which were similarly surrounded.”

BYRNE, MARGARET (Widow)

“I, Margaret Byrne, nee Bourke, widow of Dominick Byrne, deceased, live near the chapel at Knock.

I remember the evening of the 21st August. I was called out at about a quarter past eight o'clock by my daughter Margaret to see the vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the saints who appeared at the end of the little church.

It was getting dark; it was raining. I came with others to the wall opposite the gable.

I saw then and there distinctly the three images, one of the Blessed Virgin Mary, one of St. Joseph, and the third, as I learned, that of St. John the Evangelist. I saw an altar, too, and a lamb on it somewhat whiter than the altar; I did not see the cross on the altar.

The Blessed Virgin Mary appeared in the attitude of prayer, with her eyes turned up towards heaven, a crown on her head, and an outer garment thrown around her shoulders. I saw her feet. St. Joseph appeared turned towards the Blessed Virgin, with head inclined. I remained looking on for fully fifteen or twenty minutes; then I left and returned to my own house.”

BYRNE, MARY

“I live in the village of Knock, to the east side of the chapel. Mary McLoughlin came on the evening of the 21st August to my house at about half past seven o'clock. She remained some little time.

I came back with her as she was returning homewards. It was either eight o'clock or a quarter to eight at the time. It was still bright. I had never heard from Miss McLoughlin about the vision, which she had seen just before that.

The first I learned of it was on coming at the time just named from my mother's house in company with Miss Mary McLoughlin, and at the distance of three hundred yards or so from the church. I beheld, all at once, standing out from the gable, and rather to the west of it, three figures which, on more attentive inspection, appeared to be that of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph and St. John. That of the Blessed Virgin was life-size, the others apparently either not so big or not so high as her figure.

They stood a little distance out from the gable wall, and, as well as I could judge a foot and a half or two feet from the ground. The Virgin stood erect, with eyes raised to heaven; her hands elevated to the shoulders or a little higher, the palms inclined slightly towards the shoulders or bosom. She wore a large cloak of a white colour, hanging in full folds and somewhat loosely around her shoulders, and fastened to the neck.

She wore a crown on the head, rather a large crown, and it appeared to me somewhat yellower than the dress or robes worn by Our Blessed Lady. In the figure of St. Joseph the head was slightly bent, and inclined towards the Blessed Virgin, as if paying her respect. It represented the saint as somewhat aged, with grey whiskers and greyish hair.

The third figure appeared to be that of St. John the Evangelist. I do not know, only I thought so, except the fact that at one time I saw a statue at the chapel of Lecanvey, near Westport, Co. Mayo, very much resembling the figure which stood now before me in group with St. Joseph and Our Blessed Lady, which I beheld on this occasion.

He held the Book of Gospels, or the Mass Book, open in his left hand, while he stood slightly turned on the left side towards the altar that was over a little from him.

I must remark that the statue which I had formerly seen at Lecanvey chapel had no mitre on its head, while the figure which now beheld had one, not a high mitre, but a short set kind of one. The statue at Lecanvey had a book in the left hand, and the fingers of the right hand raised. The figure before me on this present occasion of which I am speaking had a book in the left hand, as I have stated, and the index finger and the middle finger of the right hand raised, as if he were speaking, and impressing some point forcibly on an audience.

It was this coincidence of figure and pose that made me surmise, for it is only an opinion, that the third figure was that of St. John, the beloved disciple of Our Lord, but I am not in any way sure what saint or character the figure

represented. I said, as I now expressed, that it was St. John the Evangelist, and then all the others present said the same – said what I stated.

The altar was under the window, which is in the gable and a little to the west near the centre, or a little beyond it.

Towards this altar St. John, as I shall call the figure, was looking, while he stood at the Gospel side of the said altar, which his right arm inclined at an angle outwardly, towards the Blessed Virgin.

The altar appeared to be like the altars in use in the Catholic Church, large and full-sized. It had no linens, no candles, nor any special ornamentations; it was only a plain altar.

Above the altar and resting on it, was a lamb, standing with the face towards St John, thus fronting the western sky. I saw no cross or crucifix.

On the body of the lamb and around it, I saw golden stars, or small brilliant lights, glittering like jets or glass balls, reflecting the light of some luminous body.

I remained from a quarter past eight to half past nine o'clock. At the time it was raining.

BYRNE, PATRICK

“I am sixteen years of age; I live quite near the chapel; I remember well the evening of the 21st August; it was Thursday, the evening before the Octave day. Dominick Byrne, junior, a namesake of mine, came to my house, and said that he had seen the biggest sight that ever he witnessed in his life. It was then after eight o'clock.

I came by the road on the west side of the church, I saw the figures clearly, fully, and distinctly, the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and that of a bishop, said to be St. John the Evangelist. (Young Byrne then told what he saw regarding the vision, just as it has been described already by several persons who were present. The young fellow showed by his hands and position how the image or apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary and that of St. Joseph and St. John stood).

I remained only ten minutes, and then I went away.

All this happened between a quarter or so past eight o'clock and half past nine"

CAMPBELL, JUDITH

"I live at Knock; I remember the evening and night of the 21 August last. Mary Byrne called at my house about eight o'clock on that evening, and asked me to come up and see the great sight at the chapel.

I ran up with her to the place, and I saw outside the chapel, at the gable of the sacristy facing the south, three figures representing St. Joseph, St. John and the Blessed Virgin Mary, also an altar, and the likeness of a lamb on it, with a cross at the back of the lamb.

I saw a most beautiful crown on the brow or head of the Blessed Virgin. Our Lady was in the centre of the group, a small height above the other two; St. Joseph, St. John and the Blessed Virgin Mary, also an altar, and the likeness of a lamb on it, with a cross at the back of the lamb.

I saw a most beautiful crown on the brow or head of the Blessed Virgin. Our Lady was in the centre of the group, a small height above the other two, St. Joseph to her right, and bent towards the Virgin, St. John, as we were led to call the third figure, was to the left of the Virgin, and in his left hand he held a book, his right hand was raised with the first and second fingers closed, and the forefinger and middle finger extended as if he were teaching. The night came on, and it was very wet and dark.

There was a beautiful light shining around the figures or likenesses that we saw. I went within a foot of them, none of us spoke to them, we believed they were St. Joseph and St. John the Evangelist, because some years ago, statues of St. Joseph and of the Evangelist were in the chapel in Knock.

All the figures were in white or in a robe of silver-like whiteness, St. John wore a small mitre. Though it was raining, the place in which the figures appeared was quite dry."

CURRY, JOHN

The child says he saw images, beautiful images, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph.

He could state no more than that he saw the fine images and the light, and heard the people talk of them, and went upon the wall to see the nice things and the lights.

DURKAN, JOHN

One of the three who accompanied young Hill. His testimony is the same as that given by each of the Byrnes.

FLATLEY, MRS. HUGH

Mrs. Hugh Flatley, widow of Hugh Flatley, states:

“I was passing by the chapel of Knock on the evening of the 21st August, about eight o’clock, and I beheld most clearly and distinctly the figures of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, and that of St. John the Evangelist, standing erect at the gable end of the chapel, towards the south side. I thought that the parish priest had been ornamenting the church, and got some beautiful likenesses removed outside.”

HILL, PATRICK

“I am Patrick Hill; I live in Claremorris; my aunt lives at Knock; I remember the 21st August last; on that day I was drawing home turf, or peat, from the bog on an ass.

While at my aunt’s at about eight o’clock in the evening, Dominick Byrne came into the house; he cried out: ‘Come up to the chapel and see the miraculous lights, and the beautiful visions that are to be seen there’. I followed him;

another man by name Dominick Byrne, and John Durkan, and a small boy named John Curry, came with me; we were all together; we ran over towards the chapel.

When we, running southwest, came so far from the village that on our turning, the gable came into view, we immediately beheld the lights; a clear white light, covering most of the gable, from the ground up to the window and higher. It was a kind of changing bright light, going sometimes up high and again not so high. We saw the figures – the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph and St. John, and an altar with a Lamb on the altar, and a cross behind the lamb.

At this time we reached as far as the wall fronting the gable: there were other people there before me; some of them were praying, some not; all were looking at the vision; they were leaning over the wall or ditch, with their arms resting on top. I saw the figures and brightness; the boy, John Curry, from behind the wall could not see them; but I did; and he asked me to lift him up till he could see the “grand babies”, as he called the figures.

It was raining. Some, amongst them Mary McLoughlin, who beheld what I now saw, had gone away; others were coming. After we prayed a while I thought it right to go across the wall and into the chapel yard. I brought little Curry with me; I went then up closer; I saw everything distinctly. The figures were full and round as if they had a body and life; they said nothing; but as we approached they seemed to go back a little towards the gable.

I distinctly beheld the Blessed Virgin Mary, life size, standing about two feet or so above the ground clothed in white robes which were fastened at the neck. Her hands were raised to the height of the shoulders, as if in prayer, with the palms facing one another, but slanting inwards towards the face; the palms were not turned towards the people, but facing each other as I have described; she appeared to be praying; her eyes were turned as I saw towards heaven.

She wore a brilliant crown on her head, and over the forehead where the crown filled the brow, a beautiful rose; the crown appeared brilliant, and of a golden brightness, of a deeper hue, inclined to a mellow yellow, than the striking whiteness of the robes she wore; the upper parts of the crown appeared to be a series of sparkles, or glittering crosses.

I saw her eyes, the balls, the pupils and the iris of each. (The boy did not know the special names for those parts of the eye, but he pointed to them, and described then in his own way).

I noticed her hands especially, and face, her appearance.

The robes came only as far as the ankles; I saw her feet and the ankles; one foot, the right, was slightly in advance of the other.

At times she appeared, and all the figures appeared, to move out and again to go backwards; I saw them move; she did not speak; I went up very near; one old woman went up and embraced the Virgin's feet., and she found nothing in her arms and hands; they receded, she said, from her.

I saw St. Joseph to the Blessed Virgin's right hand; his head was bent, from the shoulders, forward; he appeared to be paying his respects; I noticed his whiskers; they appeared slightly grey; there was a line or dark mearing between the figure of the Blessed Virgin and the spot where he stood. I saw the feet of St. Joseph, too.

His hands were joined like a person at prayer.

The third figure that stood before me was that of St. John the Evangelist. He stood erect at the side of the altar, and at an angle with the figure of the Blessed Virgin, so that his back was not turned to the altar, nor to the Mother of God.

His right arm was at an angle with a line drawn across from St. Joseph to where Our Blessed Lady appeared to be standing.

St. John was dressed like a bishop preaching; he wore a small mitre on his head; he held a Mass Book, or a Book of Gospels, in his left hand; the right hand was raised to the elevation of the head; while he kept the index finger and the middle finger of the right hand raised; the other three fingers of the same hand were shut; he appeared as if he were preaching, but I heard no voice; I came so near that I looked into the book. I saw the lines and the letters. St. John did not wear any sandals.

His left hand was turned towards the altar that was behind him; the altar was a plain one, like any ordinary altar, without any ornaments. On the altar stood a lamb, the size of a lamb eight weeks old – the face of the lamb was fronting the west, and looking in the direction of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph.

Behind the lamb a large cross was placed erect or perpendicular on the altar. Around the Lamb I saw angels hovering during the whole time, for the space of one hour and a half or longer; I saw their wings fluttering, but I did not perceive their heads or faces, which were not turned to me.

For the space of an hour and a half we were under the pouring rain; at this time I was very wet; I noticed that the rain did not wet the figures which appeared before me, although I was wet myself. I went away then.”

MCLOUGHLIN, MARY

“I Mary McLoughlin, live in Knock; I am housekeeper to the Rev. Archdeacon Cavanagh.

I remember the evening of the 21st August; at the hour of seven or so or a little later, while it was yet bright day, I passed from the Rev. the Archdeacon’s house on by the chapel, towards the house of Mrs. Byrne, widow.

On passing by the chapel, and at a little distance from it, I saw a wonderful number of strange figures or appearances at the gable; one like the blessed Virgin Mary, and one like St. Joseph; another a bishop; I saw an altar.

I was wondering to see there such an extraordinary group; yet I passed on and said nothing, thinking that possibly the Archdeacon had been supplied with these beautiful figures from Dublin or somewhere else, and that he had said nothing about them; but had left them in the open air; I saw a white light about them; I thought the whole thing strange.

After looking at them I passed on to the house of Mrs. Byrne’s in the village; after reaching widow Byrnes house I stayed there half an hour at least. I returned then homewards to the Archdeacon’s house accompanied by Miss Mary Byrne, and as we approached the chapel, she cried out ‘Look at the beautiful figures’. We gazed at them for a little while, and then I told her to go for her mother, widow Byrne, and her brother and her sister, and her niece who were still in the house which she and I had left.

I remained looking at the sight before me until the mother, sister, and brother of Mary Byrne came; at the time I was outside the ditch and to the south – west of the school – house near the road, about thirty yards or so from the church; I leaned across the wall in order to see, as well as I could, the whole scene. I remained now for the space of at least a quarter of an hour, perhaps longer.

I told Miss Byrne then to go for her uncle, Brian Byrne, and her aunt, Mrs. Brian Byrne, or any of the neighbours whom she should see, in order that they might witness the sight that they were then enjoying. It was now about a quarter past eight o’clock, and beginning to be quite dark. The sun had set; it was raining at the time.

I beheld, on this occasion, not only the three figures, but an altar further on to the left of the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to the left of the bishop and above the altar a lamb about the size of that which is five weeks old.

Behind the lamb appeared the cross; it was away a bit from the lamb, while the latter stood in front from it, and not resting on the wood of the cross. Around the lamb a number of gold-like stars appeared in the form of a halo.

This altar was placed right under the window of the gable and more to the east of the figures, all, of course, outside the church at Knock. I parted from the company or gathering at eight and a half o'clock. I went to the priest's house and told what I had beheld, and spoke of the beautiful things that were to be seen at the gable of the chapel. I asked him or said, rather, it would be worth his while to go to witness them.

He appeared to make nothing of what I said, and consequently he did not go. Although it was pouring rain the wall had a bright, dry appearance, while the rest of the building appeared to be dark. I did not return to behold the visions again after that, remaining at my house. I saw the sight for fully an hour. Very Rev. B. Cavanagh heard the next day all about the apparition from the others who had beheld it; and then it came to his recollection that I had told him the previous evening about it, and asked him to see it".

MURRAY, CATHERINE

"I am living at Knock; I was staying at my grandmothers. I followed my aunt and uncle to the chapel. I then saw the likeness of the Blessed Virgin and that of St. Joseph and St. John, as I learned from those that were about where I was. I saw them fully twenty minutes or thirty minutes."

TRENCH, BRIDGET

"My name is Bridget Trench; I live near the chapel at Knock. About half past seven o'clock on the night of the 21st of August, I was in the house of Mrs. Campbell, which was quite near to the chapel, while I was there Mary Byrne came in and said there was a sight to be seen at the chapel such as we never before beheld, and she told us all to come and see it, I asked her what it was, and she said that the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph and St. John were to be seen there.

I went out immediately and went to the spot indicated. When I arrived there I saw distinctly the three figures, I threw myself on my knees and exclaimed "A

hundred thousands thanks to God and to the glorious Virgin that has given us this manifestation.” I went in immediately to kiss, as I thought, the feet of the Blessed Virgin, but I felt nothing in the embrace but the wall, and I wondered why I could not feel with my hands the figures which I had so plainly and so distinctly seen.

The three figures appeared motionless, statue-like, they were standing by the gable of the church in the background, and seemed raised about two feet above the ground. The Blessed Virgin was in the centre, she was clothed in white, and covered with what appeared one white garment, her hands were raised to the same position as that in which a priest holds his hands when praying at holy Mass. I remarked distinctly the lower portions of her feet, and kissed them three times, she had on her head something resembling a crown, and her eyes were turned up heavenwards.

I was so taken with the Blessed Virgin that I did not pay much attention to any other, yet I saw also the two other figures. St. Joseph standing to the right of the Blessed Virgin, or to the left, as I looked at him, his head bent towards her and his hands joined, and the other figure, which I took to be St. John the Evangelist, was standing at her left. I heard those around me say that the image was St. John.

It was raining very heavily at the time, but no rain fell where the figures were. I felt the ground carefully with my hands and it was perfectly dry. The wind was blowing from the south, right against the gable of the chapel, but no rain fell on that portion of the gable or chapel in which the figures were.

There was no movement or active sign of life about the figures, and I could not say whether they were what living beings would in their place appear to be or not, but they appeared to me so full and so lifelike and so life-size that I could not understand why I could not feel them with my hands such as I beheld them with my eyes.

There was an extraordinary brightness about the whole gable of the chapel, and it was observed by several who were passing along the road at the time. I remained there altogether about an hour, and when I came there first I thought I would never leave it. I would not have gone as soon as I did, but that I considered that the figures and that brightness would continue there always, and that on coming back I would again behold them. I continued to repeat the rosary on my beads while there, and I felt great delight and pleasure in looking at the Blessed Virgin. I could think of nothing else while there but giving thanks to God repeating my prayers.”

WALSH, PATRICK

“My name is Patrick Walsh; I live in Ballinderrig, an English mile from the chapel at Knock. I remember well the 21st August, 1879. It was a very dark night, It was raining heavily.

About nine o'clock on that night I was going on some business through my land, and standing a distance of about half a mile from the chapel; I saw a very bright light on the southern gable end of the chapel; it appeared to me to be a large globe of golden light; I never saw, I thought, so brilliant a light before; it appeared high up in the air above and around the chapel gable and it was circular in its appearance; it was quiet stationary, and it seemed to retain the same brilliancy all through.

The following day I made inquiries in order to learn if there were any lights seen in the place that night; it was only then that I heard of the vision or apparitions that the people had seen.”