

## John Alphonsus Duffy Papers

Baltimore Province of the Redemptorists Archives  
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Brooklyn, New York 11209-2807

The scope of the papers of Father John Alphonsus Duffy, C.Ss.R., a priest of the Baltimore Province of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, encompasses letters, notebooks, manuscripts, photographs, published works, and sound recordings dating until shortly after Duffy's death in 1993. The papers are housed in two cabinet drawers (55 A and B) and extend 3.13 linear feet. Father Duffy's personnel files are located in the alpha files, cabinet drawer 11 A but are not detailed in this finding aid.

The Duffy Papers are divided into several sections, as detailed below, though researchers are cautioned that there is overlap of material between and within sections, whether by duplication or adjunct subject matter. The collection is open to qualified researchers. The Duffy papers also contain unpublished manuscripts that are attributable to other authors. Researchers who intend to quote from these materials should seek the permission of the copyright holder—either the author or his or her estate.

### Biography:

John Alphonsus Duffy was born in Boston, May 28, 1914, to Irish immigrant parents, Patrick Duffy and Bridget Gannon Duffy. He was one of five children—twin, Leo, brothers, Michael and Thomas, and sister, Margaret. John was raised in the parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, the Mission Church, in Boston, MA, and graduated from Mission Grammar School. He then attended the Redemptorist seminaries of St. Mary's, North East, PA, and Mt. St. Alphonsus, Esopus, NY. He professed his vows as a Redemptorist on August 2, 1935, and was ordained a priest on June 23, 1940. After ordination he was sent for higher studies at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. He received his doctorate in Philosophy in 1944, having written a dissertation titled, *A Philosophy of Poetry Based on Thomistic Principles*.

The bulk of Father Duffy's ministerial life was spent teaching at Redemptorist seminaries in North East, PA, and in Suffield, CT. At St. Mary's in North East he was a professor of literature and composition and at St. Alphonsus College in Suffield he specialized in philosophy. He was a beloved professor who instilled his passion for poetry and language into many of his students. He was an active member of the Catholic Poetry Society of America and won their *Spirit* award in 1966. He was also an honorary Vice President of that society.

Father Duffy published four books of poetry: *Thou and I* (Boston: Bruce Humphries, Inc., 1947), *O Breathing Silence* (New York: Exposition Press, 1972), *Under the Goldwood Tree* (New York: Exposition Press, 1982), and *O Beata Trinitas* (privately published, 1988).

Apart from his many years spent teaching in Redemptorist seminaries (1944-1950 and 1951-1973 at North East, and 1976-1990 at Suffield), Father Duffy ministered in the Redemptorist communities of Brooklyn, NY (1950-51), Ephrata, PA (1973-74), Tobyhanna, PA (1974-1976), and Esopus, NY (1990-1993).

Father Duffy was retired at Mount St. Alphonsus Retreat Center in Esopus, NY, when he took sick with pneumonia and heart complications. He entered the hospital on Easter Sunday, 1993, and was on a respirator until he died on December 24, 1993. His funeral took place at his home

parish, the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, in Boston. He is buried in the Redemptorist section of Mount Calvary Cemetery, Roslindale, MA.

Acquisition and Processing Information:

The John Alphonsus Duffy, C.Ss.R., Papers were collected soon after Father Duffy's death in 1993 by the Redemptorist provincial archivist, Father Carl Hoegerl, C.Ss.R. The papers came both from Father Duffy's room in Esopus and from his personnel file at the Provincial House in Brooklyn, NY. The Duffy Papers were accessioned for processing in 1994, but this processing only began in earnest in June 2009. Father Matthew Allman, C.Ss.R., processed the papers to their current level and began this finding aid in July 2009 using Microsoft Word.

Languages:

Materials are in English.

Scope and Contents:

The Duffy Papers are divided into thirteen sections. They cover materials dating from Father Duffy's student days in the 1920's up through his death and its notices in 1993-94. The collection contains a variety of items relating to Father Duffy's personal and ministerial life, but it is his literary output that makes up the bulk of the collection. When the collection was received into the archives, the manuscripts of Father Duffy's novels, short stories, plays, and poems were not arranged in any obvious order, except for the fact that many of his unbound poems had been placed in folders, marked "Yes," "No," and "Maybe." The division of these poems has been respected, while the other manuscripts within the collection have been arranged according to their respective genres.

For this finding aid, the thirteen sections of material are arranged in the following manner:

- I Biographical Information
- II Photographs
- III Correspondence
- IV Diaries and Notebooks
- V Academic Materials
- VI Articles
- VII Novels
- VIII Short Stories
- IX Plays
- X Poems
- XI Sermons and Homilies
- XII Published Books
- XIII Mixed Media

Within each section are listed the file folders contained therein. They are listed by title in the order of appearance in the collection.

Related Collections:

There is more material related to Father Duffy in his personnel file, located in the alpha files, cabinet drawer 11 A.

Index of frequent correspondents:

Rev. Charles Fehrenbach, C.Ss.R.  
Rev. Michael Gearin, C.Ss.R.  
Rev. James Galvin, C.Ss.R.  
Rev. Joseph Kerins, C.Ss.R.

The following correspondents cannot be considered frequent, but they are significant in that the two sisters sent Father Duffy many poems of their own, and Mr. Turgeon sent Father Duffy a recording of himself reading Father Duffy's poems.

Sr. James Mariah La Pointe, Sisters of Life  
Sr. Mary Agnes, P.C.C., the Poor Clares in Newport News, VA  
Lawrence Turgeon

Bibliography:

Father Duffy published four collections of poetry during his lifetime.

*Thou and I*. Boston: Bruce Humphries, Inc., 1947.  
*O Breathing Silence*. New York: Exposition Press, 1972.  
*Under the Goldwood Tree*. New York: Exposition Press, 1982.  
*O Beata Trinitas*. Suffield, CT: Privately published, 1988.

There has been no attempt made to compile a bibliography of individual poems, stories, articles, or reviews that Father Duffy published, nor has an attempt been made to catalog the addresses, homilies, or conferences that he gave throughout his ministerial career.

Detailed finding aid:

Cabinet 55 A

I Biographical Information

1. Genealogical Material

Notes from both Father Duffy and his older brother, Thomas. Thomas' notes were put together in 1965. Father Duffy added to them, sending a letter with more genealogical information to a cousin, Sade, in 1978.

2. Biographical Material

This folder contains holy cards related to Father Duffy, his family, and his classmates, a booklet he put together for his sister, Margaret's wedding, and an account of a journey by ultralight, sent to him by John Duffy of Bridgewater, MA (a nephew?).

3. News Clippings

II Photographs

Pictures of Father Duffy, family, confreres, and friends.

III Correspondence

1. 1929-1978

2. 1978-1991

3. 1991-1993
4. Undated

#### IV Diaries and Notebooks

1. Copybook, North East, 1932  
Contains handwritten copies of material by other authors.
2. "A Book of Praise"  
Contains typed copies of material by other authors.
3. Untitled Notebook  
Contains typed copies of material by other authors.
4. Pilgrimage Diary, June 9, 1966- July 14, 1966  
Contains an account of Father Duffy's pilgrimage through England, Italy, and Ireland.
5. Spiral Notebook—"I, April '77-Sept. '79"
6. Spiral Notebook—"II, Sept. '79-Aug. 15, '81"
7. Spiral Notebook—"III, Aug. 15, '81-"
8. Spiral Notebook—"IV, Feb. '84-"
9. Spiral Notebook—"Book VI, January 1989"
10. Spiral Notebook—"VII, '91, '92"
11. Spiral Notebook—"Further Random Reflections"
12. Masses Celebrated  
Handwritten notecards that appear to detail the number and location of various Masses celebrated by Father Duffy from 1968-1992.
13. Miscellaneous Notes

#### V Academic Materials

1. PhD Dissertation
2. Notes – Literature – Creative Writing
3. Notes – Literature – Poetry
4. Notes – Literature – Tuckerman
5. Notes – Philosophy – Criteriology
6. Notes – Philosophy – History of Philosophy
7. Notes – Philosophy – Ontology
8. Notes – Philosophy – Theodicy
9. Notes – Philosophy – Miscellaneous

#### VI Articles

1. Review of *Poems, 1940-1953* by Karl Shapiro
2. Bishop Neumann – Cardinal Newman

#### VII Novels

1. Novel I – *Green Wood* Manuscript
2. Novel I – Notes
3. Novel II – *Gorden City* Manuscript
4. Novel II – Manuscript Box Cover
5. Novel II – Notes

#### VIII Short Stories

Many of these stories were written as Christmas gifts for Father Duffy's family.

1. The Boy Who Wanted to Write (1947)
2. Snow in the Glen (1971)

3. How Far to Shoemaker Lane (1974)
4. A Child's Christmas Dream (1977)
5. Tales of Hickory West (1980?)
6. Tales of Hickory West
7. Two Christmas Tales of Fifty Years Ago (1981)
8. A Guest on Christmas Eve (1984)
9. Hokey and the Black Hunchy (1985)
10. One Bitter Christmas Eve (1986)
11. Christmas Back Home (1987)
12. A Blizzard for Kelly (1990)
13. A Kitchen Christmas (1991)
14. Granny Grummel's Grandson
15. In the Snowy Meadow
16. Will Yeh Marry Me, Bridie Mac?
17. Untitled
18. Unfinished Stories

#### IX Plays

1. List of "May Social" Plays
2. The Tenderness of Tepeyac  
A short play about event surrounding the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe.
3. Shine Down from Heaven  
A short play about Francis Thompson.
4. Gabbamondo  
A short play about St. Benedict Joseph Labre.
5. O Burning Face  
A short play depicting a dramatic argument.
6. The Crooked Ones  
A short play about Richard Pounce, an English martyr.
7. Le Grappin  
A short play about St. John Vianney.

#### Cabinet 55 B

#### IX Plays, continued

8. But Few Golden Priests  
A two-act play about St. John Fisher.
9. The Pearl of York  
A Play about Margaret of Clitherow, English martyr.
10. Cool Off, Cassidy
11. Untitled (Christmas Play)
12. Untitled

#### X Poems

1. Bound Collections
  - 1.01. The Rose Reflected (Esopus, 1935-41)
  - 1.02. The Flower-Drift (Washington, Sept. 1941- June 1942)
  - 1.03. Poems (Washington, 1942-1943)
  - 1.04. Poems A Thin Harvest: 1943-1944 (Washington)
  - 1.05. Heaven – Light on Earth (North East, August 1944- June 1945)

- 1.06. Words and Music (North East, June 15, 1946)
- 1.07. Drought (North East, 1946-1947)
- 1.08. A Bracket of Six (North East, September '47-June '48)
- 1.09. Maybe the End (North East, September 1948 - June 1949)
- 1.10. A Brightening Sky (Washington, January 15 – March 17, 1953)
- 1.11. Troubadour (October, 1956)
- 1.12. Theophany (North East, 1953-1958)
- 1.13. Tones from an Aging Wood (North East, June 15, 1959)
- 1.14. The Joyous Overworld (North East, September 1959 – June 1960)
- 1.15. For a Listening Ear (North East 1960-1961)
- 1.16. A Radiant Thread (North East, September 1961 – June 1962)
- 1.17. Sing Me the Beauty No One Sings (Suffield, June 24, 1972)
- 1.18. Poems: Some Old, Some New (Suffield, 1985)
- 1.19. Poems by Father Duffy I
- 1.20. Poems by Father Duffy II
- 1.21. Poems by Father Duffy III
- 1.22. Poems by Father Duffy IV
- 1.23. Poems: Per Pulchre ad Pulchrum
- 1.24. Poems: The Rose Reflected (Undated)
2. Unbound Collections
  - 2.01. No Poems
  - 2.02. Maybe Poems
  - 2.03. Yes Poems
  - 2.04. Adamec Collection
  - 2.05. Miscellaneous Poems

#### XI Sermons and Homilies

The homily notes are largely a collection of cards Father Duffy used to organize his thoughts for homilies given to the Redemptoristines during his time at Esopus, 1990-1993. The spiritual talks and conferences are material that Father Duffy used for preaching in a variety of settings, including Communion breakfasts for various groups as well as retreats for Redemptorist confreres. The outline of Christ's life is a set of notes that Father Duffy put together when studying Archbishop Goodier's *Public Life of Our Lord*.

1. Homily Notes
2. Spiritual Talks and Conferences
3. Outline of Christ's Life

#### XII Books by John Duffy

1. *Thou and I*
2. *The Breathing Silence*
3. *Under the Goldwood Tree*
4. *O Beata Trinitas: Poems New and Selected*

#### XIII Mixed Media

The mixed media consist of two cassette recordings of Father Duffy reading his own poetry, one cassette recording of Lawrence Turgeon reading Father Duffy's poetry, two 5.25" floppy disks containing poems by Father Duffy in Multimate Advantage and ASCII formats, and the *Spirit* award given to Father Duffy by the Catholic Poetry Society of America in 1966.

1. Cassette Recordings

2. Floppy Disks
3. Acrylic Trophy

Last updated: August 2010