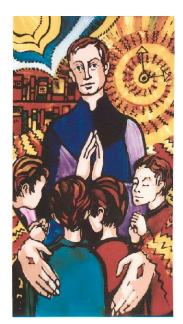
STORIES FOR REFLECTION AND PRAYER



Edmund Takes on the Street Kids

After mourning the death of his wife, Edmund Rice spent 13 years expanding his business, continuing his charitable works, and growing in spirituality. Though he planned to enter a monastery, he listened to God through the words of a woman who pointed to the ragtag boys running wild right beneath his window and challenged him to do something for them.

By 1802, Edmund had sold his lucrative business, moved from his comfortable home to a stable on New Street in Waterford, and opened up a school for the street boys. He hired teachers but these men were no match for these boys who had never been in school before and were totally undisciplined. By the end of the year his teachers were gone, but he still had 200 boys in his little school. Edmund began to second guess himself, thinking maybe he should either go back in business, or join a nice monastery where he could pray in peace.



But he also recalled hearing about "Monks," laymen who taught in school and lived and prayed together. He consulted his brother John, an Augustinian priest. Apparently, John sent two men, Thomas Grosvenor and Patrick Finn, who had been discerning a priestly or religious vocation, to Edmund. The three men began living, praying, and teaching together in the New Street school. This was the simple beginning of Edmund's "Brother Monks."

In two years they moved their school to a new building that Edmund had built with proceeds from the sale of his business. Built on an elevated site in the working-class district of Waterford, the new school and brothers' residence were named "Mt. Sion" at the suggestion of their local bishop, Bishop Hussey. A bake shop and a tailor shop were attached to the school so that the boys, who were all very poor, would have enough to eat and decent clothes to wear.

"As far as the people of Waterford were concerned, there was no doubt that [Edmund] had done the right thing when he opened this school. For three years now, the Brothers had been working with boys from the poorest families and the change in these children was the talk of the town. Their manners, their behavior in Church, their appearance, their ability to read and write and to speak intelligently were most apparent to the general public. The spirits of the Catholics were boosted and filling the school with new pupils was no problem."1

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¹ James A. Houlihan, cfc, Overcoming Evil with Good: The Edmund Rice Story, Iona College, 1997, p. 38 **ERCB Office of Educational Services** 1/14/2013

Questions for reflection and sharing:

- 1. What struck you in this story? What is of special significance for you personally?
- 2. What qualities of Edmund's character are evident in this story?
- 3. What would parents or the surrounding community say about the students in your school?
- 4. What does this story suggest about Essential Element # V "Celebrate the Value and Dignity of Each Person and Nurture the Development of the Whole Person"?

Prayer

Prayer response: Gracious God, hear our prayer.

Leader:

- In gratitude for Edmund Rice's openness to the voice of God as it came to him in the people and situations around him, we pray to the Lord. *Gracious God, ...*
- That we may persevere in the face of problems and challenges as we work with or on behalf of the students in our school, we pray to the Lord.

Gracious God. ...

- That we may recognize the value and dignity of each person, whether student, staff, or colleague, we pray to the Lord. *Gracious God, ...*
- Please add your own prayers.... We pray to the Lord. **Gracious God, ...**

Concluding Prayer:

All: O God, we thank you for the life of Edmund Rice. He opened his heart to Christ, present in those oppressed by poverty and injustice. May we follow his example of faith and generosity. Grant us the courage and compassion of Edmund as we seek to live lives of love and service. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.