



A Little Bit of Bishop Shanahan's Life

Bishop Shanahan was once referred to by one of his fellow Priests as “a real live missionary”. While many Priests and religious in Ireland were aware of the problems in Africa it often took a talk from someone like Bishop Shanahan to get all the stories of Africa across. One of the biggest problems he encountered was getting Priests and nuns to come to Africa. He had great faith in the teachings of St. Paul and on his many treks it was to the teaching of St. Paul that he turned for inspiration. There is a part in the text which he loved. It contains the words “And God hath set in the Church first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly doctors”. He emphasised concentrating on the apostolate and giving it first place in everything. He went to France in 1920 in the hope of getting help, but nothing happened. An Irish Sister advised him to go to Lisieux and pray at the graveside of St. Therese. He was a man renowned for his “apostolic fire” and the advice to go to Lisieux wasn't exactly what he wanted to hear as his problem of the lack of Priests and Nuns was serious and weighing heavily on him. Bishop Shanahan did go to Lisieux and spent many days going to the graveside of the young Carmelite Nun asking for her intercession for Nigeria. In his time there he did come to discover that the “young nun” as he called her was indeed a great missionary in spite of having never left her convent. Through his prayer to her he received the grace of finding the new direction that was needed to solve his problem. In his many talks to people in later years he would often describe how he came to be Lisieux and the graces he received there. From that time onwards whenever he was giving a talk he always addressed the people with the words “My dear fellow – missionaries”. In Lisieux it was awakened in him that everyone was a “fellow missionary”.

This is just one part of the life of Bishop Joseph Shanahan – born in the Parish of Glankeen June 6th 1871 and consecrated Vicar Apostolic of Southern Nigeria 19th September 1920.

-----Josephine Ryan-----